

Westside Board Meeting 01/15/08

Stu opened the meeting at 7:30pm.

The minutes of the previous meeting should be revised to say that the payment of the bills for the Map booklets will have to wait until funds are transferred into the checking account from the savings account.

Kathy gave the treasurer's report

Old Business:

Walker Valley

Stu reported that the DNR has not requested new locks for the gate. Hopefully that means the locks are still there.

Your editor was asked to place a reminder in the newsletter about GPS readings for collecting sites. It was also suggested that a form could be created to standardize the information and as an aid in the field when collecting GPS data.

New Business:

It was reported that the State Fish and Wildlife department is coming out with revised rules for recreation along the state waterways and lakes. This will affect gold prospecting as well as rock collecting. A number of lakes, rivers, and creeks have been added to the existing list where collecting is already restricted to certain times of the year. A brief review of the restrictions seem to leave only the month of July open for collecting in these areas. Salmon Creek and the Little Wenatchee are two areas that have been added where field trips are planned for this year.

Ed Lehman has been trying to contact the representative for the 39th district, Dan Kristiansen, to discuss the educational aspects our hobby. Ed also wants to discuss the negative impact the new restrictions on the State Fish and Wildlife lands are having on the hobby as well.

Ed reported that the Everett and East KingCo club shows have requested the WSMC display case and will also have Map booklet sales. Ed would like some help in manning the booklet sales table so he can take a break.

The new Federation Directory will be revised to allow people to keep their mailing addresses out of the directory. There concern about privacy and security have been increasing over the last few years.

Map booklets

An effort will be made to send Map booklets to the Spokane show since they have asked for them in the past.

To all: A REMINDER to attend meetings could be in your email box in the near future. Would this assist you?

WagonMaster

Although Ed is officially retired as Wagonmaster, he presented the board with the proposed list of field trips for 2008. These will be published later in the newsletter.

Meeting adjourned,

Submitted by Glenn Morita, Secretary Pro-Tem

Report on Proposed Amendments to Mineral Prospecting Rules

Meeting notes on 1/16/08 Wed. 7-9 pm. presentation at Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Mill Creek office regarding proposed amendments to 1999 Mineral Prospecting Rules. Presenter was Perry Harvester of the Habitat Program out of the Yakima Office. This was the last of four public presentations around the state. Approx. forty people were in attendance in addition to staff. Most were gold miners. I recognized at least six rockhounds present.

In summary, the new rules if approved will go into effect sometime over the summer. Among the Mineral Council trips that will be directly affected will be the Wenatchee Garnet trip. Based on the information given, the collecting period will be reduced from two months to one (July 1-July 31). Collecting on Money Creek in conjunction to the Mineral Council trip to the Damon Pythias Mine should not have to be changed as long as it is done upstream of where Money Creek meets Kimball Creek and is done August 1st through Feb 28th. Collecting downstream of that will be permitted only during the month of August. Lucas Creek in Lewis County is not on the restricted list, Salmon Creek in Clark County is and the collecting window will be the month of August. Folks need to check their own favorite creeks/streams and so on at the website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hab/goldfish/mineral_prospect.htm.

The deadline for the public to send in their comments regarding these proposed changes is January 23rd. You can send by email or snail mail. Check website for appropriate addresses.

The proposed amendments were to go to the Committee in Olympia the beginning of Feb with a public hearing. This is going to be changed to sometime in April we were told last night, because of the number and quality of comments already received from the previous three meetings. As a result, the timing of the entire proposal is to be moved back anywhere from 2-3 months or more. Originally, they had expected the new rules to become effective in May or June 2008.

After the rescheduled public hearing, where public testimony will be heard, it is uncertain if new workshops/presentations for public comments will be held.

The reason evidently for all the new stream additions is that in 2006, The Dept. of Fish & Wildlife was asked to check what fish species populated the various streams and creeks in Washington. They then determined the spawning, and incubation times for each species as well as the stream temperatures based on elevation. This had never been done before. Given this information, new "work windows" were put together to minimize impacts on egg beds. Previously, restrictions were made just guessing what species were present and so on.

These new time restrictions are being proposed to replace those of the 1999 pamphlet. In some cases, the "windows" have opened up considerably; in others, the amount of time allowed to work a stream, creek or tributary has been drastically reduced. It is possible, although I haven't checked that there may be some streams that were eliminated completely from restriction if no fish species were found at all. Mr. Harvester assured us that fish species for all the named streams were verified. If a working window was very small then most likely that area had both spring and fall spawning species.

The list of people/organizations on the "Work Group" slide appeared to be a mixture of government and private including Bruce Beatty of the WA Miners Council; nothing evident regarding rockhounding interests though.

Needless to say, the majority of people there were gold panners who were NOT happy with the nit picking being done to their recreation and livelihood. Although Mr. Harvester went to great lengths to indicate that these proposals were made with the assistance of the miners themselves, it was clear that as Mr. Beatty said: "In many cases, they agreed to disagree." Many comments were made regarding such extreme restrictions such as where even "standing" in certain areas of the streambed was prohibited. They then asked why fishing or hiking wasn't being targeted equally.

Mr. Harvester wasn't able to answer my questions regarding the status of Lake Creek, so I left at 9:10 pm. Quite a few people remained behind. I found appropriate maps and made the determination myself.

Submitted by Christina Morrisey

More observations about the proposed changes

We went to the WA Fish and Game meeting last night. Was far more people than I think the game dept thought there would be. it was a packed crowd. Although I saw a guy in an Everett Rock Club vest, I noticed that there was a definite lack of people from the rockhounding community. Especially when they cited who all the people were invited to be on the planning committee for these new mineral collecting rules. Not a one was from a rock club, they were all from mining associations and gold prospecting groups. So although they made rules that will affect our rockhounding field trip activities they did not bother to get any perspective from the recreational rockhound. I plan to put that in my comments.

Comments regarding these new proposed rules must be received by email or mail or fax no later than 1-23-2008. So it is important for our rockhounding members to review and comment ASAP.

The main gist was that there were now two categories, mineral prospecting activities that are permitted year round on all streams, rivers etc in WA, which is a broadening of the current mining rules and a second category that is limited in its scope of time allowed to do it which seems to be a reduction of rights.

The year round stuff would be using hand tools etc that don't intrude on the wet part of the streams - things like dry panning and highbanking. They also indicated just walking in the stream was not limited as it was not considered 'work'

The activities in the water part of the streams would be limited based on the attached chart to that time of the year only. There are stream areas on this list that we use that are affected by this change.

They also have unclear rules about removal of 'boulders embedded in the stream' they don't specify what size a boulder is versus a rock and don't specify what embedded means, one surrounded by gravel, how deep etc. I am thinking of some areas of Jade collecting that the rocks removed might qualify as a boulder depending on who is the judge and probably not a good idea to leave that in the judgment of a fish and game officer. We often move large rocks to access gravels of the stream in our activities as well. Granted if it would take machinery then we likely wouldn't be able to move it anyway with our hand tools.

I haven't gone over the specific stream areas we collect in yet, but I brought out my maps to begin. The rainy creek area near where we collect Garnets does show a reduction of the time allowed for wet excavating which is what we do, to July 1-July 31. I think that is an unnecessarily small period given that we have never encountered a fish redd (nest) or any fish eggs on the stream digging the month of August. Also concerning is the small periods of time will mean that various rock clubs squeeze in their trips so tightly that the stream is

potentially overused rather than the use being spread out more allowing for rest times during the active period.

It is also possible we might be able to apply for a permit to use out of the time period specified in the rules, but we all know how likely that would be or convenient to get.

Please spread the work and transmit this to club members, mineral council members, federation members etc so that our voice might be heard even if it is belatedly.

Thanks,
Norma Kikkert

The Lighter Side of Dinosaur Digging

by Bob Simon

Digging dinosaurs is serious business. One mistake can destroy a bone that has rested peaceably for many millions of years. Of course, it is important to have fun while enduring 100 degree heat and blazing fun. Below are a few examples of the "lighter side" of dinosaur digging in the Big Horn Basin, Wyoming.

Hare Qaeda

It is a 10 mile trip from the town of Shell to the dig site on the Red Canyon Ranch. There is a mix of paved roads, gravel roads, and then the bentonite "roads" that are really glorified cow paths. One of the "dangers" on these roads are the hundreds of rabbits that inhabit the area. Every morning the rabbits are lined up on the sides of the roads awaiting their "targets." For some reason, the rabbits only make a mad dash across the road when the vehicle is upon them. They aim for running in-between the front and rear tires in their suicidal scramble across the road. This can happen as many as 15 times during a typical morning. We believe these furry terrorists, whom we term "Hare Qaeda," are on missions to disable the vehicles or cause accidents. We haven't seen any suspicious backpacks on the critters as yet, but they may be there, only hidden in their fur. The afternoon trip back from the dig site often shows the results of the "road trips". Dear rabbit remains litter the roads, evidence of failed missions and many vehicles having fended off these tiny terrorists.

Better to be lucky than smart

One day, I spent about 6 hours pedestalling around the bones of the Camarasaurus. This is very tedious, boring work. It is necessary to dig around the bones and dig deep, to elevate the bones above the surrounding rock to be able to get a firm plaster jacket around the bones for protection. Usually, this is just digging and digging with little or no hope of finding any additional bones. This day, I gave 3 of my volunteers a reprieve from the mundane work of pedestalling and they dug in the bone bed looking for isolated bones and teeth. Near the end of the day, I finished my task and decided to try my luck in the bone bed. That day, only a few bone pieces had been found and the volunteers were grumbling. I picked up a pry bar (a 6-foot length of heavy steel with a sharp point on one end) and decided to pound into the hard ground to see if anything might turn up. The first pry bar stab stopped me in my tracks. I had unearthed a beautiful and extremely rare, 4-inch Torvosaurus tooth (meat-eating dinosaur). My volunteers came over and muttered something about "not fair... how did you know?... wow!" Sometimes it is better to be lucky than smart or good.

Odd discoveries

Often, dinosaur bones that need to be excavated, are very close to one another and need to be broken (hopefully at preexisting fractures) for proper removal. One of the back legs of the Camarasaurus found this summer proved to be a difficult extraction. The 5-foot femur was on top of the fibula (lower leg bone). The tibia was carefully removed intact while the fibula possible away from the femur. In a few moments, I apparently found another bone that had not been seen under the femur. I carefully began exposing this bone until I saw something that I recognized. Low and behold, the new bone had a label with a number on it. Realizing that dinosaur bones that have been buried for 145 million years are not "pre-labeled," it was obvious that the new bone was a part of the fibula that had been labeled prior to removing the other sections. The mystery bone was no mystery at all, simply a forgotten piece of the Camarasaurus puzzle. This is one of the reasons all bones and bone sections need to be properly marked and documented in the ground prior to being removed.

via eTumbler 01/08, from Breccia, 11/07; from The Collecting Bag, 10/07