

TO: Town of Lyons
FROM: Boulder County
DATE: December 3, 2018
RE: Boulder County Sport Shooting Partnership and Range Update

Purpose

- To provide background on the Sport Shooting Partnership initiative.
- To help residents understand why the quarry site was deemed appropriate.
- To communicate what the future process might look like.

Background

Since 2013, Boulder County has been working with the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, and Larimer, Gilpin, and Clear Creek counties on the Northern Front Range Recreational Sport Shooting Management Partnership, or Sport Shooting Partners. The purpose of the Partnership is to develop a landscape-level, multi-jurisdictional strategy to provide safe, responsible, and accessible recreational sport shooting opportunities while addressing conflicts near residential areas and with other recreation users across the northern Colorado Front Range.

The Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland are proposing management of recreational sport shooting (RSS) on the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests. RSS is a longtime and legitimate activity on the Forests; however, the 1997 Forest Plan does not contain any direction for managing these activities. Colorado's population is growing rapidly and more than 80 percent of this population growth is occurring along the Front Range. The mixing of RSS activities on National Forest System lands in close proximity to residences and other high-use public areas is causing safety concerns.

The Forest Service recently released its draft decision on the Recreational Sport Shooting (RSS) Management Project. View the full press release [here](https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/arp/news-events/?cid=FSEPRD595429) (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/arp/news-events/?cid=FSEPRD595429>). There are three components to the draft decision:

1. Language amending the Forest Plan to address management of RSS;
2. A forest-wide map showing areas where RSS is unsuitable and will be restricted after shooting ranges are developed and opened; and
3. An adaptive management strategy that allows the Forest to quickly respond should new or unforeseen safety issues occur in the future.

Detailed information, including the draft decision and an interactive map, is available on the Forests' [website](https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=46910) (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=46910>) - scroll to the bottom of the page and look under the "Decision" tab for the specific details. The draft decision would restrict recreational sport shooting on 225,574 acres of the 1.4 million acre Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, with the bulk of the restrictions occurring in Boulder County. *The draft decision will not affect lawful hunting with a firearm in areas where it is currently allowed.*

In order to ensure that the public has access to areas where they can safely shoot, closures of unsuitable areas in the draft decision is contingent upon new public ranges being open. To meet this requirement, Boulder County will need to open two new shooting ranges. After investigating numerous sites over the past several years, two sites are currently being explored. The first option involves the expansion of the Boulder Rifle Club to enable public access, located northwest of Boulder. The county has provided a

letter of support for the expansion and half of the 25% match for a range design grant Boulder Rifle Club successfully was awarded from Colorado Parks & Wildlife. The second site option is a privately owned quarry outside the Town of Lyons.

With regard to the Lyons Quarry site, Boulder County is committed to working closely with the town; county staff has met with the Town of Lyons Board of Trustees on three occasions and have conducted several tours of the quarry site, which have included sound testing of different firearms at that location. Currently, Boulder County is in discussions with the property owner of the quarry site to determine if the owner would be interested in selling the property. In addition, Boulder County has been in conversations with a law enforcement organization that is looking to build and manage a shooting range for law enforcement training and public use. However, it should be noted that there is no formal agreement with the law enforcement entity and they are also exploring other locations for a range. Given that Boulder County does not yet have an agreement on the quarry property and has not had the opportunity to do any specific range engineering at the quarry, we do not have any specific information about the design of the range, including sound mitigation or safety measures which could or would be used at this site.

Site Selection Process

In terms of the site selection process, the County has been exploring possible sites for over five years. The Sport Shooting Partnership developed some initial criteria to help direct a mapping exercise which generated some possible sites on public lands with most ending up not being feasible after closer inspection. The initial criteria were not developed to be an absolute measure for what was a suitable site for a range, but rather they were used as a broad brush mapping exercise. This provided numerous public land areas which we visited. Soon after, we toured the Estes Park Gun & Archery Park which is located in a canyon east of Estes Park. We learned that canyon topography could aid with safety and sound mitigation so we expanded the GIS mapping to include these types of sites on public lands. We then reviewed aerial maps and made numerous site visits which resulted in five possible sites in the mountains, all on Forest Service lands. At the same time, the County was investigating private property and County Open Space lands. The county approached Cemex a couple of years ago about their property adjacent to North 55th Street, which is located southwest of Rabbit Mountain Open Space. During our conversations with Cemex, they indicated that they would soon no longer be using the sandstone quarry located west of the Hwy 36/66 intersection. After touring the site the county determined that it could warrant further evaluation because it is within 30 minutes from major population areas, located at the northern gateway to the mountains of Boulder County, a previously disturbed site, and would enable year-round access. The identified five proposed range sites on the Boulder Ranger District are not being actively pursued at this time, but will remain possible back-up locations. In addition, the county continues to explore and visit other possible sites on public and private lands.

Future Process

After a Letter of Intent to Purchase is signed by the property owner and the county, the county can begin the process of developing a draft site plan. Once there is a draft plan to review, the county will convene a community meeting with the Town of Lyons to solicit feedback from residents. The meeting would occur before a land use application is submitted.

If either of these locations is deemed feasible, they will have to go through Boulder County's Special Use Review application process. This process requires public hearings before the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners. Boulder County's regulations for shooting ranges can be found online ([Land Use Code \(Article 4-510, page 4-116\)](#)) (<https://assets.bouldercounty.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/land-use-code.pdf>).

To stay apprised of the project you can sign up for [email updates](#) (<http://www.sportshootingpartners.org/email-signup/>) from the Sport Shooting Partnership. For more information, contact Garry Sanfaçon, 720-564-2642 or gsanfacon@bouldercounty.org.