

Grant and Cash Match Acceptance Staff Report

DATE: AUGUST 22, 2023
TO: DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
THROUGH: DAN DERTZ, DIRECTOR OF OPEN SPACE & NATURAL RESOURCES
FROM: ANDY HOUGH, ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES COORDINATOR
ZAK HUMBLER, SPECIAL PROJECTS ENGINEER

SUBJECT: ACCEPTANCE OF \$300K SHOOTING RANGE GRANT & \$100K CASH MATCH

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUSINESS MEETING: AUGUST 22, 2023 @ 1:30 PM

I. REQUEST

This is a request to accept a \$300,000 shooting range grant from Colorado Parks and Wildlife. There is a 25% cash match required, equating to \$100,000, bringing the total project funding to \$400,000. The purpose of the grant is to purchase steel targets, target hangers, shooting benches, and gabion baskets to be used in the construction of the future Turkey Tracks shooting range near Westcreek in SW Douglas County.

II. BACKGROUND

In January 2016, Douglas County signed the memorandum of understanding MOU convening the Southern Shooting Partnership (SSP). The SSP is a board made up of eleven landowning agencies with an area of interest between Pueblo and Denver. The SSP's mission is to address recreational shooting management and concerns on public land within this area of interest. As with all recreational uses, the volume of target shooting has increased significantly. Public safety and resource damage incidences have also increased. The SSP is addressing these concerns. One of the four central tenants agreed to in the MOU is cooperative efforts and sharing of resources across boundaries.

As part of the SSP's efforts, the US Forest Service launched the 'Integrated Management of Target Shooting' decision process and concomitant National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) clearance process. The intent of this decision process is to manage recreational shooting on the Pike National Forest. In summary, this decision process will likely close the Pikes Peak and South Platte Ranger Districts to dispersed shooting and authorize the

construction of three or more shooting ranges to accommodate the shooters displaced by the dispersed shooting closure.

Turkey Tracks is the most likely of eight shooting range locations under consideration to be approved in this process. It is also the largest, at approximately 1,200 acres. It is the only range location within Douglas County. The conceptual design of this facility includes:

- A 30-station precision long range rifle range with steel silhouette targets at known and unknown distances out to over 1,000 yards
- A 15-station hunting simulation range with steel silhouette targets out to over 1,000 yards
- Five omni-directional galleries for unique training scenarios
- Two 10-station 200-yard traditional rifle galleries
- Two 10-station 100-yard traditional rifle galleries
- Three 10-station 30-yard pistol galleries
- Ten 2-bench, vehicle accessible galleries, 50 to 100 yards each, providing a more individualized shooting situation

Please see the included map (Exhibit B) for the conceptual design.

The application for the grant and authorization for the \$100,000 cash match was approved by a 3-0 vote at a January 11, 2022, BOCC work session. It has taken the intervening time to go through the application process, receive the initial award notification, and get final CPW approval after they received their mandated US Fish and Wildlife Service authorization and increase the award. CPW originally awarded Douglas County \$109,987. CPW was recently able to bump our award to the full \$300,000 requested. Please see the attached memo as final authorization of this award (Exhibit A). Once BOCC acceptance is granted, CPW will create a Purchase Order to reimburse expenses incurred under this grant.

III. CONTEXT

This grant will support the efforts of the Southern Shooting Partnership. It demonstrates good faith in fulfilling Douglas County's obligation to share resources and efforts across boundaries.

The US Forest Service USFS is one of the members of the SSP. In the negotiations that have occurred since 2016, USFS staff has been hopeful that the other ten SSP members would create additional shooting ranges on lands other than National Forests. To date, these efforts have all failed for one reason or another.

Douglas County, Teller County, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife all recently sent letters to the USFS strongly encouraging them, among other things, to build more than three ranges initially. These letters also recommended changing adaptive management

triggers that would require the other members to build ranges on non-national forest lands before the USFS would consider building a second range per district. The reason for the concern is that sufficient shooting range capacity would be constructed soon enough to accommodate the great number of shooters that would be displaced by the initial closure of over 700,000 acres to dispersed shooting.

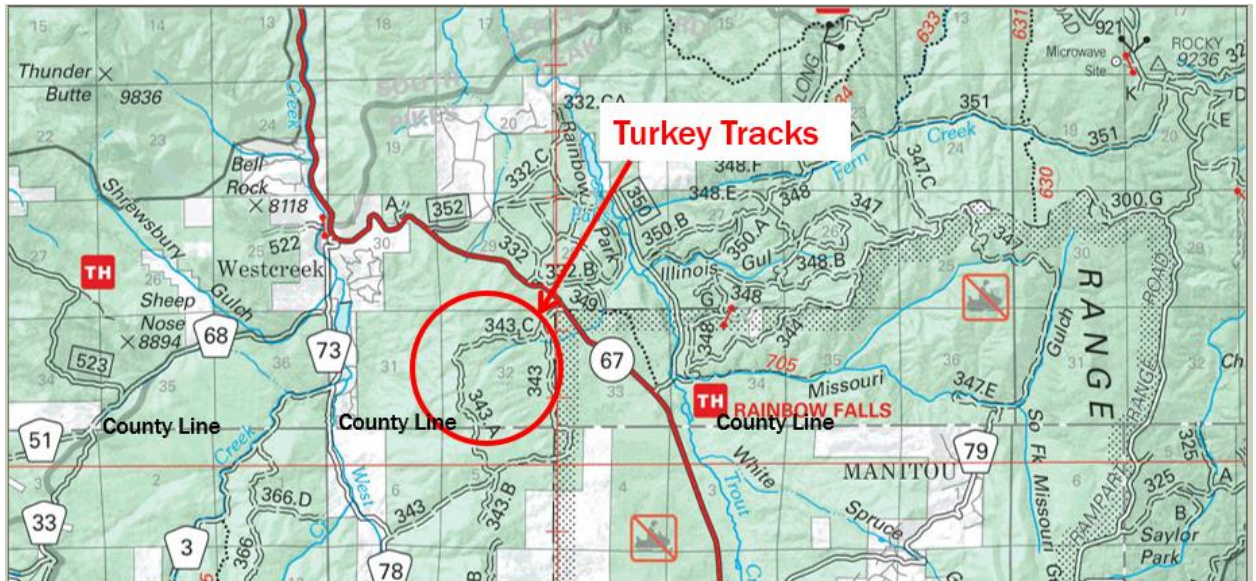
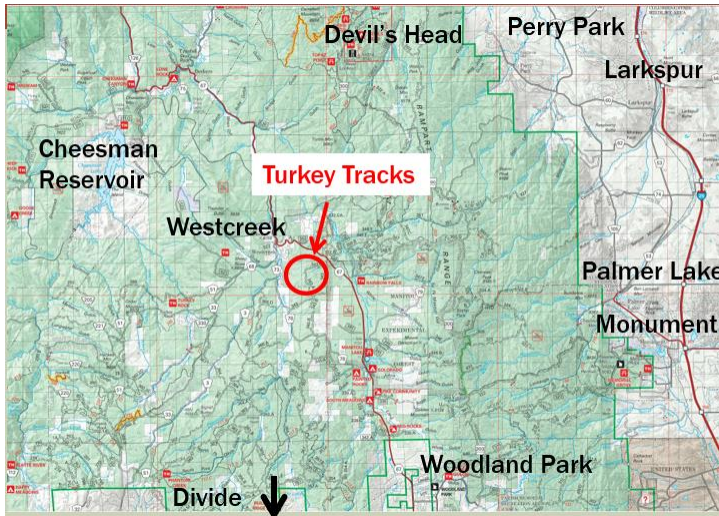
The donation of essential materials for construction of the Turkey Tracks shooting range demonstrates tangible contribution as a partner in this regional solution as well as to fulfill our obligations under the SSP MOU. More importantly, the partners have asked the Forest Service to step up and quickly build sufficient shooting range capacity on National Forest lands to accommodate the vast number of shooters that will be displaced by a dispersed shooting closure. This is an expensive and daunting task. Beyond the expense of capital construction, there will also be ongoing law enforcement, monitoring, on-site range management, and maintenance requirements that the Forest Service will have to add to their already overfull list of responsibilities. By funding the bulk of the steel silhouette targets, hangers, shooting benches, and gabion baskets required to construct and stock this range, it demonstrates a major financial and physical construction effort to match their contribution of land and their efforts in permitting and long-term management. If the SSP partners do not step up to help fund, construct, and manage these shooting ranges, the Forest Service will be much less inclined to build enough ranges/range capacity to meet the needs of our citizens.

Staff anticipates that the pre-purchase of the targets, benches, and gabion baskets authorized by this award will expedite the Turkey Tracks shooting range opening by as much as two years. Once the final USFS decision process and NEPA authorization is concluded, range construction can begin. Normally, once final approval was received, the Forest Service and/or its partners would have to budget for large expenses such as this in one fiscal year and wait until the next fiscal year to purchase materials. This does not even factor in construction and installation and the corresponding contracting if needed. With the prepurchase of the most expensive components of the Turkey Track shooting range, the minimal final grading plans (e.g., GESC) and grading and earthwork with organic heavy equipment assets will be able to proceed very quickly.

As a final consideration, for \$100,000 of General Fund money and whatever other help the Commissioners choose to offer in the future, we will be getting an incredibly robust, 1,200-acre (approx.) public shooting range within Douglas County with 110 firing positions. Only one other range in the region offers a 1,000-yard range; this one has two with 45 firing positions and dozens of reactive steel targets. It offers unique features such as omni-directional shooting galleries and the opportunity for unique walking & shooting scenarios for special events. To acquire land, design, permit, and build such a facility would cost millions of dollars. This range will be as good as many destination shooting ranges, but right here in Douglas County and available to our citizens.

IV. LOCATION

The Turkey Tracks proposed shooting range location is located along the USFS Road 343 complex off Highway 67, east southeast of the Westcreek community.



V. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommends acceptance of the \$300,000 shooting range grant award and final authorization of the \$100,000 cash match.

ATTACHMENTS

- Exhibit A: Final Grant Award Memo from CPW
- Exhibit B: Turkey Tracks Conceptual Design Drawing