

<p style="text-align: center;">YANKEE SPRINGS TOWNSHIP Informational MEETING Regarding the DNR Shooting Area Located in Yankee Springs Saturday, July 11, 2015</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yankee Springs Township Hall 284 North Briggs Road, Middleville, Michigan 49333 9:00 a.m. MINUTES</p>	<p>FINAL MINUTES Accepted as information Aug. 13, 2015 With attachment: 8-1-2007 letter from Tom Thompson</p>
<p>Meeting called to order at 9:15 a.m. by Meeting Chairman, Mark Englerth</p> <p>Board Members: Present: Mark Englerth, John Jerkatis</p> <p>Staff Present: Rich Beukema, Greg Purcell, Paul Heystek, Cathy Strickland, Frank Fiala, Larry Knowles</p> <p>Representing the DNR: Sara Schaefer – Biologist Mark Sargent- Field Operations – Manager Mike Mshar, DNR Law Enforcement</p> <p>Visitors: 5 (not including YS Board & staff members present)</p>	<p>CALL TO ORDER</p> <p>ROLL CALL</p>
<p>Introduction by Mark Englerth, Township Supervisor: Englerth stated the purpose of the meeting and that the township would like to keep the community as knowledgeable and as involved as possible regarding the shooting area and nearby neighborhoods.</p>	<p>Introduction/Purpose of Meeting- Mark Englerth, Township Supervisor</p>
<p>Sara Schaefer – DNR, Biologist: gave a brief history of the range and how it has transpired over the years, even decades. Schaefer pointed out that the shooting area is not officially a “range”. It is just a shooting “area”. Once people start shooting in an area – they try to make it safer. Over the past four or five decades everyone has come and it’s called a “shooting area”. A shooting area has no rules. Shooting areas have become more and more popular. They’ve (DNR) tried to direct the shooting. Trees and tall grasses have been planned to limit where people shoot. Signs have been put up, but people use signs for targets. Benches were put up, but shot at and burned up. So the DNR has drawn up a plan. It is now in the planning process with the people who deal with these plans (so it is kind of up in the air right now). Berms are needed, as well as a designated parking area, and a designated area for shooting clay pigeons. Schaefer commented on not being able to do anything about the sound, but they want to at least keep the projectiles in place. Schaefer commented that only paper or cardboard targets are legal, but everything is being shot at and DNR personnel have to clean up the mess.</p> <p>M. Englerth talked about what the community can do. Englerth mentioned Mr. Schantz from Al & Pete’s in Hastings and his wish to get involved.</p>	<p>Acknowledgement of Visitors</p> <p>Page 1 of 4 Info. DNR/Shooting Area Mtg. 7.11.15</p>

Mark Sargent- DNR Field Operations Manager- wants to make the range safe and the rules enforceable and better for shooters.

Mike Mshar, DNR Law Enforcement – commented there hasn't been an officer covering the area for a while due to retirement and promotion. Two officers will be coming in hopefully by the end of the month. Mshar will introduce the new officers to some of the hotspots in the area.

Discussion/Public Comment:

Rich Beukema, of the YS Planning Commission- inquired as to when and how this plan would be put in place.

Sara Schaefer, DNR commented that this project (Barry County) was 3rd on the list for the grant. Schaefer added that she wasn't sure with the money allocation as to when the project would receive the grant.

Mark Sargent, DNR Field Operations Manager, commented that meeting the financial match is an issue and they do not have all the funds in hand yet. Echo Point in Allegan is #1 priority, #2 is not in the area, #3 is in Barry. They may have enough for this to be done in the first year, but it may be 2017 before they have the match funds. They do have their concept design. The DNR group still has to go through design, engineering and then implementation.

Paul Heystek, YS Planning Commission- spoke of a gated area for the range.

Schaefer (DNR) commented that they haven't decided if it will be a manned or an unmanned range.

Sargent (DNR) added that it changes things up if the range is manned or unmanned. A manned range would involve a full-time employee. Sargent commented that probably the 1st attempt will be to see if they can use an unmanned range versus a manned range.

John Jerkatis, Township Treasurer- mentioned surveillance and video management.

Discussion occurred regarding discharging firearms on state property. You can shoot anywhere it is not posted "not to shoot" – if in a safe and not reckless or careless manner. No dawn to dusk rules from the DNR- unless township has ordinance in place against it.

Frank Fiala, Planning Commission Chair- commented on putting posts in and closing off areas so they people cannot drive their vehicles back into areas that are close to the subdivision areas.

Mshar, DNR commented that they have stumped off areas aggressively in other areas, but people move around them, or even move the actual stumps.

Mr. Monell, Resident of a YS nearby subdivision, commented that he has a bullet hole in his house. Fortunately the bullet went into a closet in his home. (It was noted that Mr. Monell lives in Old Farm Village subdivision –in the back corner of the subdivision).

Acknowledgement of Visitors
Cont'd

Discussion/Public Comment

Discussion/Public Comment: *continued*

Mark Sargent – noted two other informal shooting spots in the area that this same thing is happening to, and hopefully over 2 or 3 years are being closed down.

Sargent commented on the skyrocketing sales of firearms and people are looking for places to shoot these firearms. The DNR is trying to provide those facilities.

Jerkatis commented on the volume of hunters in Yankee Springs. Jerkatis inquired as to whom he should call if someone is acting recklessly with a firearm.

It was noted that in an emergency situation - call 911. In a hunting violation or situation in a game area that isn't necessarily a complete danger at the time, call the Report All Poaching (RAP) line or the Plainwell Office and ask for a conservation officer at 269-685-6851. Mshar commented that he'd first call 911 and explain the situation, and 911 Dispatch can also contact the DNR.

Greg Purcell, YS Planning Commission – inquired as to who makes the call in terms of designating it as a “range”, what is the time frame, and if all physical improvements have to be made prior to making the decision.

Schaefer commented they are trying to design a range – trying to make it safe as possible (1st priority), get it designated as a range (director makes that designation), and making rules for it - all in one step. Schaefer added that they are doing as much as they can during the week with the time that they have.

Mark Sargent – referring to the website, commented that there's no icon for it (YS Shooting Area) being a designated range at this time. However, social media claims the area as a “range”- unofficially.

Schaefer commented that it is a three year grant period. It could start in the 2016 fiscal year, or 2017 or 2018 fiscal years, added Schaefer. Schaefer also noted that the DNR's fiscal year begins in October.

Mshar added that even if it is designated a “range”, responsibility falls on others as well.

Greg Purcell, Planning Commissioner – inquired as to what the dollar amount is for the project.

It was confirmed that the grant request was for approximately \$150,000 – and the match is a quarter of this amount. (\$37,500 is 25%).

Mark Englerth – inquired as to how the township and people of community can move them from spot #3 to spot #1.

M. Sargent – commented Echo Point is #1 and is more urgent of a matter. Sargent also commented that if the community wants to address this, they can send mail to the local representatives and/or to the Director. Sargent added that they (the local DNR staff) are very pro active in showing Lansing what conditions they are dealing with.

Schaefer commented on giving to the funds as gifts which could be earmarked for a particular project and squared away and left in that account for that purpose.

Discussion/Public Comment:
(continued)

Discussion/Public Comment: *continued*

Mark Englerth asked about a “Friends of” group or an advocate group.

Sargent commented on having mixed results with these groups. There are “Friends of” groups that have been great, and there have been some that are problematic.

Pete Schantz – commented that if he gets the time, he will try to pursue groups to meet with their leaders and discuss funding.

M. Sargent – talked about flexibility for a clean up day for the community. Maybe the DNR could get a dumpster for the day, etc.

Englerth commented on going through the Planning Commission and sending a letter with concerns to the DNR Director. Englerth asked if this would be helpful.

Sargent commented that if the letter was in support of the range and it’s future direction (because of concerns), it would be helpful.

Ron Monell – the YS resident who has a bullet hole in his house, commented that he never claimed to speak for everyone, but he commented that he and quite a few others didn’t want to get rid of all of this (the shooting area). They would just like to make it tolerable for everyone.

Contact Information:

Barry SGA: (269) 795-3280
Sara Schaefer – DNR Biologist (269) 795-3280
Mark Sargent- DNR - Field Operations – Manager (269) 512-1218
Plainwell Regional Office (269) 685-6851, Lt. Thayer

Conclusion of Meeting:

Englerth thanked the DNR representatives and those in attendance, and closed the meeting at 10:10 a.m. Approximately six people from the meeting went to the range to view the current shooting area. (Vivian Conner, Barry County Commissioner, joined the group after the meeting as she was involved with another county activity earlier this morning). Also, Mark Englerth, noted after the group visited the shooting area, that a case of explosive targets (containing tannerite) was found in a car trunk at the shooting area. Mark Sargent of the DNR, told the owner that these targets could not be discharged on state land. Heated discussion occurred.

After the meeting, it was noted that the township should hear from the DNR after the 1st of October due to the funding mechanism that is in place.

*Please see attachment dated August 1, 2007 from Tom Thompson to the DNR (Mark Bishop) and Al McCrumb (former YS Township Supervisor).

Respectfully submitted:

Deb Mousseau
Recording Secretary
7.13.15

Accepted by: _____
Janice C. Lippert, Township Clerk

Date: Aug. 13, 2015

Discussion/Public Comment:

continued

SHOOTING RANGE
ATTACHMENT TO
7-11-2015
DNR

August 1, 2007

Re: Shooting range in Barry State Game Area, Yankee Springs Twp, Barry County

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a property owner in Yankee Springs Twp near the above mentioned shooting range. I am writing to express my concerns regarding some of the activities that have been taking place at this site.

I have personally witnessed all of the below accounts of what I feel are negligent, dangerous and disrespectful activities all being done at this range on State property.

- 1) Excessive shooting beginning as early as 7:00 am and continuing as late as 11:00 pm with the use night vision and low light optical equipment.
- 2) The use of fully automatic weapons.
- 3) As many as 10-15 people all shooting at the same time with as many as 10-15 children and spectators all present at the site.
- 4) Skeet shooting by multiple shooters firing on targets being cast in all directions.
- 5) Excessive use of alcohol by the spectators and shooters.
- 6) Large amounts debris and trash left by the patrons is scattered about the site, including empty\used shell casings, beer cans and bottles, broken glass, old TV's and computer monitors that have been used as targets and bags of dumped garbage.
- 7) Thousands of pounds of lead in the bank that is in danger of seeping into the ground water.

In addition to the above list, the excessive noise caused by all the shooting and partying is extremely disruptive to all of the nearby residents. What's more concerning however is the unmistakable evidence at the range that shooting is being done in all directions including the street and nearby neighborhoods. This kind of recklessness poses a threat to any resident in the area every time they are outside of their home.

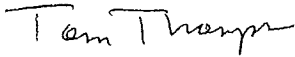
I am an avid outdoorsman and hunter, prior to every single season in which I hunt, I take out all of the weapons that I will be using and I sight them in. I do all of my shooting at ranges that are sponsored by a local gun or sportsman's club. All of such ranges are either open to the public or accessible for a small fee. I know of no laws that state that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or the State of Michigan is required to provide the public with a place to target shoot.

There is no reason in my mind why the behavior that is taking place at this range should be allowed to continue. The users of this land have shown an obvious disrespect for the property itself as well as the surrounding residents and should not be allowed to continue such action. It is my opinion that the agency that is tasked with conserving and protecting this land and the residents around it, is acting in a very irresponsible manner by allowing such actions to take place. If the necessary measures are not taken, I feel that it is inevitable that a needless tragedy will occur.

I formally request that access to this area be closed off to motorized vehicles by what ever means necessary and that the mess that has been created be properly disposed of. I further request that all enforceable legal measures be taken to prohibit the use of firearms for means other than hunting on this property.

In closing, I would like to thank you for time in this matter. I sincerely hope that this issue can be resolved in the near future.

Respectfully,



Tom Thompson

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