

## **A Summary of the Major RCWA Board 2023 Activities**

After another very busy year of RCWA range activities, the RCWA Board thought it would be appropriate to recap the major items that were addressed during 2023 that were above and beyond the normal day to day operational challenges.

- A. Construction of the new .22 rimfire range was completed in the latter half of 2023 and is proving to be a popular RCWA range addition. With both 50 and 100 yard ranges with permanent steel targets and multiple wire target units, it can handle multiple concurrent users.
  
- B. A complete refurbishment of the archery range was started in 2023 and is now operational. A permanent backstop has been constructed so that both bows and crossbows can now be used on the new 60 yard facility. A new target system has been installed that provides 5 different shooting positions/lanes. The old storage shed will be replaced in 2024 as well since the floor supports and floor were largely rotted out. Some refinement and landscaping activities will continue into 2024. The RCWA Range manual was updated to reflect the new archery range operational so please check on that if you plan on using the new archery range.
  
- C. There was a Colonial Pipeline appearance during the summer with a few days advance notice – actually a subcontractor appeared. Colonial Pipeline has a large gas pipeline that runs through the RCWA property and exits under the lake and dam area. The owner, Colonial Pipeline, must periodically (no clear definition of how often this periodic cycle is) clear the pipeline right of way (about 50 feet) of major vegetation. They appeared this summer for the first time in at least several years with a request for access to the range property to clear the pipeline right of way. This turned into some protracted discussion since they bring two 18 wheelers of equipment as well as some additional motorized equipment to perform this work. We had to make sure they took the necessary precautions to protect the newly paved range road from damage. There was also some discussion about water quality protection for the lake since they were clearing most of the vegetation – not exactly what they wanted to deal with but did get some seeding of part of the cleared area. We hoped to do some seeding of some wildlife friendly vegetation on the outer edges of the pipeline cleared area this fall but no rain has curtailed that effort till spring.
  
- D. Shotgun field operations continued to be a busy area of activity. An outside vendor was contracted to make an appearance and service all of the skeet and trap machines. This

is a regular heavy inspection/repair activity. Brandon Holt went through the 5 stand equipment as well.

- E. The range facility maintenance activities continued to be successfully run by Carey Graham. We added a summer temp person this year (a teacher off for the summer) to help with mowing and weed eating during the prime grass and weed maintenance season. Maintaining the range equipment comprises a big part of this effort so that we have the right equipment to get the job done. Some of the challenge with range facility maintenance continues to be keeping a balance between what we do ourselves or contract out. We contracted out some large tree removal work along the range road during the year – both dead tree removal and some storm cleanup. Landscaping changes involving moving dirt around on the range is another area we usually get outside help to accomplish as we did with the new rimfire range and the new archery range work.
  
- F. The Lake and associated wildlife area:
  - a. The long running dialogue with the NC dam inspection group over a number of years regarding the range lake continued thru 2023 – new regulations that needed compliance and some lake drain valve repair work remain open items. We thought we would wrap this up in 2023 but it just will not go away. In some discussion with previous Board members we found this effort has now been in process for over 10 years. Our contractor started a new cycle of paperwork due again to changing regulations. This has turned into a true example of bureaucracy at its finest. Hopefully in 2024.... We are also still waiting on availability of divers via our contractor to repair the lake drain valve – over two years on that list.
  - b. An Eagle Scout project is currently underway to repair some walkways and bridges in the wildlife area.
  - c. We started some preliminary work on gathering information to use in locating the RCWA property boundary along the county park property. This became an open discussion with the crew doing the Colonial Pipeline right of way clearing. It was deferred to winter months when less vegetation was in the way. Also, looking for a metal detector someone might offer in locating some corner markers.
  - d. Many may not be aware that much of the property used for wildlife/camping area is covered by a separate Board since the property was donated with the stipulation it be managed as a wildlife area. This responsibility requires time and effort to make sure those requirements are met.
  
- G. The range front gate continued to be an area of on going attention. We finally got internet service at the front gate at the end of 2022 at about the same time we were

notified by the company that provided technical support for the DoorKing front gate equipment that they were getting out of providing technical service for DoorKing front gates ( could not find and retain technicians). After some searching, we found a new group for DoorKing technical support with a certified DoorKing technician. Working with this new vendor, we have successfully upgraded the RCWA front gate to a cloud based system which allows the RCWA support staff much more flexibility in maintaining the membership related information. The down side is that the cloud based system has a much more complex software system that is not supported by our DoorKing technical support but rather is supported by the DoorKing customer – RCWA. We are still learning that part. This new cloud based system does allow the RCWA support staff much more timely response to members with gate access card issues. We are dealing with increased numbers of bad member gate access cards as a result of newer vehicles with wireless charging pads that zap chip enabled cards. The new cloud based front gate process provides much better security for backup and recovery processes so we are no longer dependent on a single laptop device and allows the RCWA staff to handle many administrative duties remotely from home. We also recently upgraded the front gate readers to include a keypad option so it is easier for the RCWA support staff to allow front gate access for one off RCWA range access situations without physically having to go to the front gate or issue temporary gate access cards that never seem to get returned.

- H. After finally getting Spectrum cable installed to the RCWA clubhouse in 2022, the effort in 2023 has been on getting wi-fi internet service to other parts of the RCWA range. The clubhouse obtained wi-fi internet access as soon as the Spectrum cable was installed in 2022. An external wi-fi internet network was subsequently installed by the RCWA staff using a third party set of hardware components. This provides limited wi-fi internet service to all the areas around the clubhouse as well as the large bays (5 thru 13) on the lower part of the range. This went with a learning curve and some subsequent tweaking of the network components during 2023 to fit the RCWA environment. One of the big challenges was providing wi-fi internet access inside of the large metal buildings – they are dead zones for wi-fi and cell phone. The RCWA office is inside of the large metal barn building. The RCWA wi-fi internet vendor provides hardware components to connect the external wi-fi network to the inside of the building. Full internet access is now provided to the RCWA offices. We are looking at adding wi-fi internet access to the class room in 2024.
- I. The RCWA membership administration process under went a number of changes in 2023. We finished working off the new membership request backlog in 2023. There

are now no significant delays in handling new range membership requests. Addressing the annual membership renewal process was reorganized in 2023 and will be tweaked a bit for 2024 to streamline the process and engage more member volunteer help to address some of the more labor intensive processes in a more timely manner. The dedicated office workspace and clubhouse space for multiple volunteers along with internet access now allows all of this process to be handled at the range in a timely manner. This was a major effort for 2023.

In summary, the RCWA Board would like to thank all of the RCWA members for their cooperation and understanding as many of these projects impacted accessibility to some of the range facilities from time to time. We are trying to keep range impact information current on the RCWA web site and Facebook. There are a lot of moving parts to a fully functional Rowan County Wildlife Association range facility – keeps an all volunteer RCWA Board very busy.

The RCWA Board would like to wish all the RCWA members a happy holiday season and a happy and prosperous new year.