

## **A Summary of the Major RCWA Board 2022 Activities**

After a very busy year of RCWA range activities, the RCWA Board thought it would be appropriate to recap the major items that were addressed during 2022 above and beyond the normal day to day operational challenges.

- A. The new 2022 RCWA Board started off the year by addressing a key operational issue associated with the RCWA shotgun fields operations. RCWA had historically outsourced the operation of the shotgun facilities to a third party. Due to the on-going ammo and reloading component shortages and increased prices, the numbers and activity level of shotgun shooters was greatly reduced. No third parties offered a bid to operate the RCWA shotgun facilities for 2022 – just no financial justification. A group of the RCWA experienced shotgun shooters ( SROs – Shotgun Range Officers) offered a proposal to run the RCWA shotgun operation. After some protracted discussions between the SRO group and the RCWA Board, a working agreement was produced. The RCWA shotgun operations have been successfully operated by the RCWA SRO group for 2022. Part of this transition included shutting down public access to the RCWA shotgun facilities and the RCWA range in general. Non members may now only use the RCWA shotgun facilities as a guest of a RCWA member or participation in a scheduled shotgun match. One of the benefits of this new operational model is that the RCWA SRO group now has the best records of the detailed operational data for the RCWA shotgun facilities that RCWA has probably ever had. Another benefit of this new operational model has been increased availability of the shotgun facilities to the RCWA members. If the range is open then the RCWA shotgun facilities are open to the RCWA members that have completed the shotgun orientation class. This transition has involved a lot of personal time and effort from a number of RCWA members – especially the dedicated SRO group and friends as well as some Board members.
  
- B. The next big project for the RCWA Board in 2022 was addressing the RCWA range road which was in need of some major repair work. After soliciting estimates, the Board was faced with a wide range of proposals both in the work proposed and the prices. There was a big difference between companies that were more driveway oriented and those that did roads. The Board ultimately went with a vendor that was more road experienced and took the time to offer a detailed assessment of what was needed for RCWA and provide a solution that would last. As a result, this consumed a big part of the RCWA discretionary funds for 2022. The RCWA maintenance crew did bunch of the landscaping (grass and rip rap work) on the ditches and shoulders which has worked very well. This was completed in August.

C. The range facility maintenance activities continued to be successfully run by Carey Graham. We added Carey's brother to spread out the work load a bit more since neither wants a fulltime job. Maintaining the range equipment comprises a big part of this effort so that we have right equipment to get the job done. As a result of this continuing effort, we decided to get rid of a couple of older pieces of equipment – an old John Deere mower and old EZ-Go utility vehicle. We added a new commercial ZTR mower in 2022 with the latest mowing technology. These are very hard to find in today's market. This gives us two modern commercial ZTR mowers plus the big John Deere tractor with a couple of mowing decks. This provides us the ability to handle all of the range mowing duties and have some redundancy if we need to do some equipment maintenance. Some of the challenge with range facility maintenance is keeping a balance between what we do ourselves or contract out. The range road repair was an example of deciding that we needed an outside solution since we did not have the equipment to handle that effort. Landscaping changes involving moving dirt around on the range are another area we usually get outside help to accomplish.

D. The Lake and associated wildlife area:

- a. There has been a long running dialogue with the NC dam inspection group for a number of years regarding the range lake – new regulations that needed compliance and some lake drain valve repair work. We thought we would wrap this up in 2022 but it just will not go away. By the time we completed all of the required paperwork and submitted it early in 2022, we were informed that some of the regulations had changed since we started the process and additional paperwork was needed. This has turned into a true example of bureaucracy at its finest. Hopefully in 2023.... We are also still waiting on availability of divers to repair the lake drain valve – over a year on that list.
- b. There was considerable tree damage in parts of the Wildlife Sanctuary due to both storms and beavers that was cleaned up to maintain proper water flow through the area.
- c. Some volunteer Boy Scout efforts were used to clean up and repair some trails and walkways.
- d. RCWA added a second aerator on the lake since the addition of the first one has improved the water quality.
- e. RCWA had the lake tested for fish population and it showed a healthy fish population. In the fall per the recommendations of the fish testing results, we added some live shiners for some additional food for the bass population. We also stocked up on fish food for the automated solid food feeders as well.

- E. The range front gate continues to be an area of continuing attention. During 2022, we made some improvements in the reliability of the Range gate operation – reworked some wiring and installed a better UPS unit in the gate control box. The gate vendor providing the front gate system is upgrading the gate hardware/software to move it to a cloud based system which provides much improved ability to manage the gate operation remotely using a cell phone or laptop based platform. This requires that we have internet access at the front gate control box. We worked with Spectrum to install an internet connection to the front gate control box so we can eventually upgrade to the new cloud based system. We hope this becomes operational in 2022.
  
- F. RCWA range wi-fi coverage is another goal on which we finally got some traction in 2022. We finally managed to get Spectrum cable installed to the RCWA clubhouse in 2022 after agreeing to split the costs with Spectrum – this has been a multiple year effort. So we now have high speed internet/wi-fi service at the RCWA clubhouse. We are now working on getting some external wireless based components installed around the range so we have fairly complete range internet access/coverage. This effort will continue into 2023.
  
- G. The RCWA Secretary has been responsible for managing all of the new RCWA member process. This effort has been the source of increased activity since the latter half of 2021. This increase was caused when we lifted the range membership cap from 1500 to 2000 and shut down public access to the shotgun facilities. We had a large and growing backlog of new member applications with increased expectations from those prospective members on now becoming RCWA members. This resulted in a much increased work load for handling new members. There is considerable work associated with adding new members – verifying all the application paperwork, payment accounting, making the badges and new member orientation classes. We have been working on getting more Board members involved in this membership process to see if we can spread out the work load a bit. This will be a continuing area of focus in 2023. We added an on-line application tracking system to the RCWA web site so the status of the application processing was more open to both the applicants and the Board. We also added some detailed membership documentation on the RCWA web site and refreshed all of the new member application forms to hopefully make it clearer on what was needed/expected.
  
- H. Another fun Board accomplishment was producing an updated Range Manual. The existing manual had not been updated in 5+ years. This was a major effort and we hope to keep the Range Manual more current going forward.

- I. Range 1 (Rifle Range) was reconfigured in 2021 to open up more 200 yard target options and add additional dedicated 50 yard shooting positions. The electrical work to complete the integration of the new 50 yard shooting positions into the Rifle Range warning system was completed in 2022.
- J. Construction on a new rimfire range was started in the latter half of 2022. This will become operational in 2023. It will include covered shooting positions with seated shooting tables and include 50 and 100 yard target areas.
- K. After some landscaping preparations around the big barn in 2021 to manage water flow in the adjacent areas, a large pole shed was added along the full length of the big barn. This allowed us to move several large pieces of equipment out of the barn while keeping them out of the weather and allowing easier access to the equipment. This provided much more efficient use of space in the big barn and while providing increased equipment space under cover.
- L. We have continued to work at using the RCWA web site and the FB site to convey range related information to the RCWA members. The newer FB site was made private per member request for RCWA members only during 2022. This has reduced a lot of non-RCWA related traffic with some minor increased work load of sorting through the request for access to the RCWA member group. We get 10 to 15 requests a week to join that have no affiliation with RCWA. Many of these requests claim to be a RCWA member and have to be validated against the membership list. We also completed the transition away from a RCWA email system associated with the RCWA web site to using standard Gmail and Yahoo services that are free. This reduced some money and support costs and improved availability.

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 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.