

Olympic-style archery finds a home in DuPage forest preserves

Shooting range proposal losing steam

By **Katie Foutz**

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Olympic-style archery gained some ground in the DuPage County Forest Preserve District on Tuesday, while sport shooting seemed to lose some.

Target archery ranges could open in two to five DuPage County forest preserves this spring and summer, district Land Management Director Mike Palazzetti told the Special Committee for Recreational Activities.

"We believe we have the ability to place within the forest preserves ... areas where people can come and enjoy that sport in a safe manner," he said.

Last month, archery enthusiasts from Naperville and Carol Stream, who regularly drive up to two hours to practice, asked the Forest Preserve District for practice fields closer to home. Several DuPage County residents are nationally ranked competitive archers.

Palazzetti pointed to areas near existing parking lots that already provide a 1- to 2-acre flat open field for the archery ranges. The district may rent targets to users or have them bring their own.

Signs would be placed on nearby trails to warn other preserve users they are near an archery range. Participants also would limit their arrow tips to lighter, nonhunting types.

Executive Director Brent Manning, a bow hunter, said archers are very safety-conscious.

"If a fellow archer breaks that invisible line and walks forward (toward a target), all will drop their bows," he said.

The full board of commissioners will consider the issue March 2.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Wallace Brown, R-Downers Grove, urged the committee to take action on a recreational gun shooting range idea that first surfaced in September. He said he had a stack of phone messages to return to people opposing the idea.

"It doesn't look like it's going to stop," he said. "I would not support a shooting range — even though I shoot and hunt — in our forest preserves."

Commissioner Roger Kotecki, R-Carol Stream, said staff members haven't found places in the district that would be appropriate for a shooting range, but no formal report has been made.

"Between being too close to people's homes, being too close to trails, being too close to places people are trying to see wildlife and the places the birds actually are, I don't think we have a place to put this in any of our holdings," Kotecki said.

FYI

One-acre target archery fields may open at the following sites this spring and summer:

■ Greene Valley Forest Preserve near the 79th Street parking lot.

■ Danada Forest Preserve at the south end of the race track.

■ Blackwell Forest Preserve at the base of Mount Hoy.

■ Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve east of the horse trailer parking lot.

■ Fullerton Park Forest Preserve on the north end of the model helicopter field.

Source: DuPage County Forest Preserve District

Committee Chairman Joe Cantore, R-Oakbrook Terrace, asked staff members to report on any progress at the next committee meeting.

Also Tuesday, the district staff proposed charging seasonal permit fees at the district's off-leash dog areas starting July 1. Because the program is starting in the middle of the year, the district would charge DuPage residents only \$20 this year but \$40 for all of next year. Nonresidents would pay \$250 per year.

Staff members first recommended the changes in November, responding to increased conflicts between dogs and owners at smaller off-leash dog exercise areas. Permits can be revoked if owners do not follow district regulations, including controlling dogs and keeping them vaccinated.

But primarily, permits are a way to recoup the costs of building and maintaining the areas, Palazzetti said. Six forest preserves have off-leash dog areas.

The district's first off-leash dog area, a 4-acre site at Mayslake Forest Preserve in Oak Brook, cost \$52,000 to build.

Much larger parks under construction and planning now at East Branch in Glendale Heights and Springbrook Prairie in Naperville are expected to cost \$450,000 each, and at Greene Valley in Woodridge, the park cost \$165,000 to build. East Branch's dog exercise area is still in the planning stages, but the latter two sites will open around Memorial Day.

It costs the district \$200,000 per year to operate and maintain all its dog exercise areas.

The full board will consider the issue at an upcoming meeting.

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