

Congressman enjoys ribbon shooting

Labrador Newsletter – Friday, Aug. 14

Dear Friends,

I was delighted to participate in my first-ever “ribbon-shooting” ceremony Wednesday, marking a key step for a long-sought shooting range near Riggins.

Idaho State Bureau of Land Management Director Tim Murphy, Idaho County Sheriff Doug Giddings and Jonny Wilson of the Salmon River Gun Club joined me in blasting at an orange ribbon to celebrate the transfer of 31 acres of federal land to Idaho County.

The range, on a perfectly situated site high above the Salmon River, will be developed by the county and the gun club. It will benefit local sportsmen and sportswomen, law enforcement officers and visiting hunters. My office began work on the transfer in 2011; my bill transferring the land became law in December of last year.

The gun club was founded in the early 1950s, but lost access to its range in 2007. Wilson and fellow club member Justin Mann doggedly searched for the new site, fending off rattlesnakes as they scaled the opposite side of the canyon to take photos.

Will Runnoe of the BLM’s Cottonwood District endorsed the plan and the county took steps for an administrative transfer. When federal regulations blocked that remedy, I introduced my bill.

Unfortunately, Mann passed away last year and wasn’t present Wednesday. But his wife, Lynda, was on hand to hear the warm applause in his memory. The club plans to name a long-range rifle course for Mann, who made his living as a trapper.

“Justin would be real happy today,” said Gary Solberg, who rented pasture to Mann for the horse and mule he used in the backcountry.

Rural values remain vibrant in Idaho, where neighbors help neighbors. Interest in the gun club has boomed, said Wilson, also a deputy sheriff. On Thursday as Wilson did chores in the yard, folks stopped by to volunteer to help build the site.

Yvonne Jordan is a former secretary-treasurer of the club who attended the ceremony with her husband, Howard. Last month, she celebrated her 80th birthday and last week she made all but one of 25 shots trapshooting at the range in Grangeville.

“It’s an addictive thing and I always said I wanted to shoot ‘till I was 80,” said Jordan, a four-time member of the Ladies All-star Team for 17 clubs in North Idaho. “Now my goal is 85. I hope I’m still alive and can come up here and shoot.”

Sheriff Giddings is determined to do his part, saying his goal is to have the range open within a year. “It’s a great day,” he said. “The government works.”

I wish it happened more often. But the success celebrated this week is a worthy example of what’s possible when citizens and their governments work hand-in-hand to accomplish a public good.

Thank you,

