

CASE STUDY:

BUILDING / ENHANCING SHOOTING RANGES WITH PR EXCISE TAX FUNDS



Florida: Palm Beach County Shooting Sports Complex

State Agency: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Project/Range Name: Palm Beach County Shooting Sports Complex (PBCSSC).

Location: 11730 Seminole Pratt Whitney Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33412

Contact information: Bill Cline bill.cline@myfwc.com (850) 528-1761

PBCSSC Website: [Palm Beach County Shooting Sports Complex | FWC \(myfwc.com\)](https://www.pbcssc.com)

Project Type: This project was the creation of a new range.

Total Project Cost: \$12,000,000

Annual Cost to Operate the Range: \$965,000

Project Timeline: 8 years from planning and construction to the opening of the range.

Range Usage: The PBCSSC Range is designed to accommodate rifle, handgun and shotgun.

Number of Shooting Lanes/Fields: The PBCSSC offers the following lanes: Six position 300-yard rifle lanes. 20 position 200-yard rifle lanes. 20 position 100-yard rifle lanes. 42 position 25/50 meter handgun lanes. 30 position 10 meter/50 foot handgun range. Six trap fields. 9 skeet fields. Five international bunker trap fields. 15 station sport clays course. One 5 stand sporting clay field.

Intended Users: The PBCSSC is designed to support target shooters and hunters.

How is the Range Staffed: The PBCSSC is staffed by both full and part-time FL Fish and Wildlife agency personnel and volunteers.

Funding Services: The Palm Beach County Shooting Sports Complex is funded through both local, state and Federal (PR) grants and funding from the National Rifle Association (NRA).

Actual Time to Completion: The project took 8 years to complete.

Biggest Obstacles: After the challenges of selecting a site, obtaining approvals and permitting, funding the construction was the next biggest hurdle. The initial design included

everything we wanted for the completed project. Increased costs of construction presented challenges when we looked at the estimated build-out price.

How Were Those Obstacles Overcome? This was overcome by breaking the project down into four smaller bite-sized chunks. This enabled federal funds and state funds to accumulate to move the project forward. With the substantial increases in federal funding, we were able to move forward with a couple of these phases of construction simultaneously.

What portion of the project took more time than expected? The Palm Beach County Shooting Sports Complex (PBCSSC) management team indicated that finding a suitable location took more time than they had anticipated.

What Range Development Resources Were Most Helpful? The PBCSSC team thought that Clark Vargus and the [NRA Range Source Book](#) were most helpful. Clark's years of competitive shooting and his knowledge of shooting ranges – he visited hundreds of ranges when shooting competitively across the country and designed more public shooting ranges than any other engineering firm – always made him a valuable assist in any of our range development. For years our agency had Clark's firm as a consulting engineer on our continuing services contract. Whenever I found potential suitable site to build a shooting range, I could send him a Google earth view of the parcel, we would call and discuss a menu of shooting sports options we could place on the parcel and his staff could provide me a conceptual lay-out by the end of the week. Clark was a valuable asset and he will be missed.

What Information/Knowledge Do You Know Now That You Wish Knew Earlier? The range development team would have loved to have had more knowledge about international trap. Developing a set of engineered drawings that meet ISSF standards, current building codes, and are acceptable for submission through the state bidding process was a challenge. During the planning phase, I visited every international trap field I could find in the southeast. There's just not that many of them and not all of them exactly meet the ISSF specifications.

What Additional Resources Would Have Made the Task Easier/Cheaper/Quicker? The first sporting clays course we designed and built was a year before I came to work with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. It was a great course but does not resemble anything we would build now. The difference is years of visiting other successful facilities and gleaning from their successes and failures. If you incorporate what shooters want with best practices for safety, sound and environment you will have a winning combination.

There are great risks when looking to build a new shooting sports complex. We all like to succeed, and don't want to fail. This is why it is such a daunting task. To be successful, don't study just the successes, but also look at the failures. Look at ranges that had to shut down and learn from their mistakes. Find professionals to work with that understand "which end of the flyrod the bullet comes out of." Hiring an architect or engineering firm that does not have any knowledge of shooting sports is a recipe for disaster if you do not constantly review their work and correct their mistakes.

For additional information on Florida shooting ranges, visit: [FWC-Managed Public Shooting Ranges | FWC \(myfwc.com\)](https://myfwc.com/ranges)

