The Future Is Now!

What plans does Wesson have for the future? Rifle cartridge revolvers . . . optional twist barrels . . . a single-shot pistol . . . a shotgun slug rifle . . . and more.

The newly reenergized Wesson Firearms Co. is not inclined to slow its pace just because it has put two new products into the line in less than a year: the just-announced small-frame Model 738P .38 Special, and the Compensator Accessory Kit. Instead, it is drawing up a menu of plans for a full platter of new chamberings and models of its existing products, engineering refinements and accessory options, and entirely different types of firearms. It appears to be storming forward with every intention of putting itself into the arena as a major player in the firearms world.

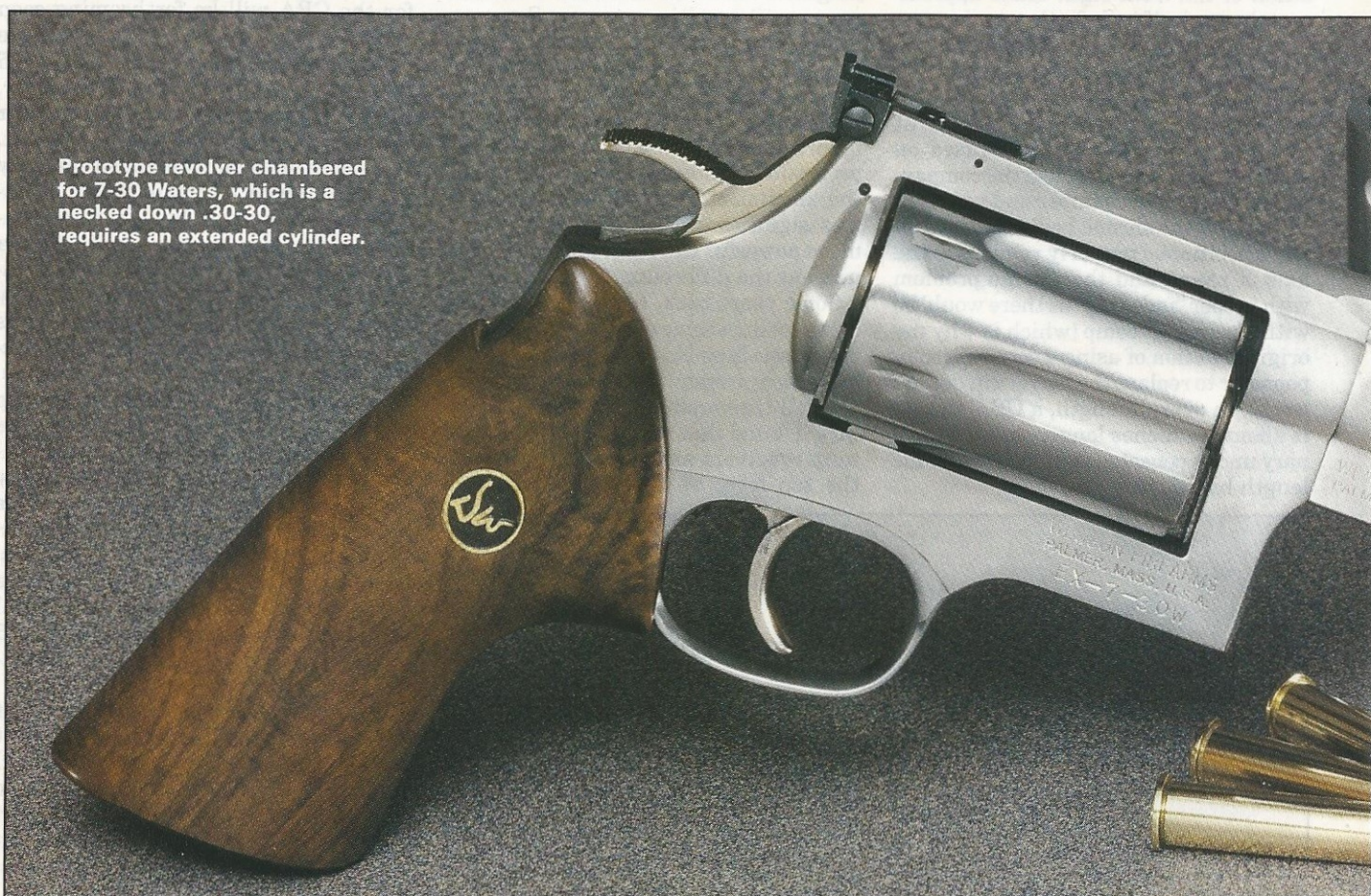
Some of these "future items" have long been hoped for by fans of the Dan Wesson concept; others will come as a complete surprise. Some are already in the final prototype stages and will soon be ready for introduction; others are still in the conceptual stage and may be several years from production. Some may never be introduced. A firearms company that is not willing to spend a major part of its resources and human energy testing, developing, and even discarding new ideas, even if all it gains is an understanding of what *doesn't* work, is a company that will not succeed.

However, I think the ideas that the Wesson Firearms development team is presently pursuing *will* work, and it has opened the doors of its engineering department to allow us to share with *Shooting Times* readers an unprecedented look at the innermost future product-development plans of a major firearms manufacturer. If you like any of these proposed products and accessories, let the company know. The final decision to produce any product in any industry, no matter how useful it may seem to its inventors, will still always hinge on whether or not its customers think it's worth having.

Big-Bore Guide Guns

A product that's not too far from being a reality is the .445 SuperMag "Guide Special." This version of the regular stainless Model 7445 will feature a four-inch VH-type barrel, and is intended to provide a heavy-power backup belt gun to a big-game hunter's primary rifle. The .445 cartridge (which is essentially a .315-inch-longer-cased .44 Magnum) can be loaded to power a 300-grain bullet at more than 1350 fps from a barrel this length, which gives some validity to the concept of a revolver for personal defense against an Alaskan brown bear.

An even more refined version of the same concept is the stainless-steel .445 "Alaskan Guide," which will have the same length barrel fitted with the new compensator shroud, synthetic grips, and an overall matte-black titanium nitride coating (a technique originally developed for the space shuttle). The overall barrel shroud length of this piece will be about 5½ inches (still practical for a belt holster), and it will be virtually indestructible and totally corrosion proof. What a tool this will make for the serious outdoorsman! (Wesson Firearms is also prototyping three-inch "snubby" versions of its basic Model 44 and 744 .44 Magnum revolvers as well, for those who don't need quite the muscle of the .445, with a new-design wood grip to help moderate the effect of muzzle jump.)



Prototype revolver chambered for 7-30 Waters, which is a necked down .30-30, requires an extended cylinder.

7-30 Waters Revolver

Another fully developed concept which Wesson engineers expect to have in production by the end of this year is a heavy-duty long-range revolver chambered for 7-30 Waters. The 7-30 is a fast-moving 7mm loaded in a necked-down .30-30 case, which means this gun is going to have a *long* cylinder. Nonetheless, it will be a conventional-function double-action revolver in all respects, and will operate the same as all other Dan Wesson guns. The only significant engineering redesign that seems likely is that the cylinder will require a full-length support axle instead of the ordinary ball-detent latch found at the rear of other Wesson models. The front crane-latch system will continue unchanged. This will be a dynamite long-range revolver for hunters and metallic silhouette shooters.

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Better Accuracy Technique

The company is also experimenting with ways to improve the revolver's accuracy even more. Two notions that have yielded excellent results so far are "optional-twist" accessory barrels and "two-stage" forcing cones. A .357 SuperMag barrel with a 1:14-inch twist rifling instead of the conventional 1:18.75-inch twist is already planned for 1992. If the concept proves popular, it will be extended to .44 Magnum, .445 SuperMag, and .375 SuperMag barrels as well.

The notion is startlingly obvious. Everybody knows that bullets of different weight in any given caliber stabilize in flight either better or worse depending on the particular rate of twist of the rifling through which they are fired. For most gunmakers, the challenge is to employ a rate of twist (and land/groove configuration) which will be as "all purpose" as possible for the range of bullet weights and shapes likely to be fired from the cartridge for which the gun is chambered—because the gun has only one barrel. Not so with Dan Wesson revolvers. *Their* barrels are easily interchangeable. So why not offer accessory barrels with different rifling twists? If a long-range hunter or metallic silhouette competitor is firing a bullet that stabilizes best with a slower rate of spin, use the slower-twist barrel; if his selected bullet works better at a faster spin, use a quicker twist. Maximize your accuracy. What a neat *idea*—and it's unique to the Wesson revolver family. Barrels will retail for between $44 and $57.

Two-Stage Forcing Cone

The notion of a "two-stage" forcing cone is part of the same set of accuracy enhancements. One of the major problems inherent in a revolver is getting the bullet to center in the bore after it jumps across the barrel/cylinder gap and before it is grabbed by the rifling. The forcing cone helps guide it into proper place, but most bullets in most revolvers go through the forcing cone slightly off center, and remain slightly off center after the lands and grooves lock on (cast lead and swaged lead bullets are more affected by this than jacketed bullets). The Wesson Firearms notion is to employ a section of the bore directly in front of the forcing cone, the length of the bullet's caliber, which has no rifling and is sized at groove diameter. After this comes the normal tapered leade into the rifling. The effect of the nonrifled section is to seat the bullet concentrically in the bore *before* it is engaged by the rifling. (The basic notion has been around a long time and is similar to the old "Hudson Throating" found in cast bullet accuracy rifles.) Wesson Firearms prototypes using two-stage forcing cone barrels and weight-specific rifling twists are demonstrating as much as a 20-percent improvement in average group diameters at 50 yards—and this from guns that are already considered by some to be the most accurate regular-production revolvers made.

That's just a sampling of some of the projects that the Wesson Firearms designers are working on. Looking even farther down the road, to 1993-94 and even beyond, the company is exploring the possibilities of some entirely new products having nothing to do with revolvers whatsoever. A design for a falling-block single-shot pistol chambered for cartridges which other designs can't handle is being drawn up. And what would you think about a Wesson Firearms bolt-action, magazine-fed slug gun, designed to take full advantage of all the recent advances in shotgun slug technology and providing rifle accuracy out to ranges of 150 yards?

Keep it up, guys.