

**NATURAL HERITAGE ADVISORY COUNCIL
MEETING OF OCTOBER 24, 2007**

AGENCY REPORTS

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE – Jim Eychaner

Governor Chris Gregoire announced the appointment of Kaleen Cottingham of Olympia as the director of the Recreation and Conservation Office. Cottingham was the Deputy Commissioner of Public Lands from 1997 - 2001 and led the agency's strategic direction and policy initiatives on a wide variety of natural resources issues. From 1993 - 1997, she was the Supervisor of the Department of Natural Resources, where she was responsible for both the day-to-day operations of the department as well as governmental and public relations. Prior to this, Cottingham served as the natural resources policy advisor and then the legal counsel for Governor Gardner.

The Biodiversity Council conference is set for December 4th – see attachment.

The RCFB funding meeting is November 1 and 2, for boating, ORV, trails, firearms.

RCO staff is involved in the relicensing for Jackson hydro project (Snohomish County PUD), recreation/access issues include concepts such as road-to-trail conversion of the south shore road bordering Morning Star NRCA.

From the Invasive Species Council: Council has formed 5 workgroups to work on various components of the strategic plan which include Education, Coordination, Regulations, Funding and Technical. Their Strategic Plan is due June of 2008.

DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY – Jeanne Koenings

The grant competition for NOAA's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) will be delayed from Fall 2007 to Spring 2008. This is a national competition with grants awarded for up to \$3 million per acquisition project. Each coastal state can apply for 3 projects. Jeanne Koenings at Ecology is WA State's lead for CELCP applications. Ecology has applied for three Coastal Wetland Grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Ecology applied for grants for Pilot Point in Kitsap County, Tarboo Creek Watershed in Jefferson County, and Queets River in Jefferson County. USFWS will announce successful projects in January 2008.

STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION – Rob Fimbel

State Parks is moving ahead with forest health efforts on both the east and west sides of the state, partnering with DNR, WDFW, and NGO to develop management plans. Mount Spokane and the Nisqually-Mashal property are the first to have plans, with Seaquest, Brooks Memorial, Fields Spring, and others to follow this biennium. WAC 352-28 is being rewritten to facilitate these and other resource management activities. The agency is also looking to address resource issues in the Seashore Conservation Area, including habitat for sensitive plant and animal species, removal of invasive dune grasses, and halting of shore pine succession. Finally, the agency's Natural Resources Program will be developing a 10-year strategic plan to identify and prioritize actions to

conserve the agency's natural resources. Efforts will be made to link this work with the Biodiversity Council's 30-Year Strategy.

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE – Elizabeth Rodrick

Endangered Species – The Bald Eagle Status Report was updated and is out for public review. DFW will propose that the eagle be downlisted from State Threatened to State Sensitive at the December Commission Meeting. Several other documents are underway including the Wolf Management Plan, the Washington Ground Squirrel Status Report, and the Sharp-tailed Grouse Recovery Plan. The first phase of the project to augment the western gray squirrel population on Fort Lewis began this fall. Seven animals were captured in the Methow Valley (the most similar genetic stock) and released on Fort Lewis.

Land Conservation – The Western Governors' Association passed a resolution to protect wildlife migration corridors and crucial wildlife habitat in the West. Secretary of Transportation MacDonald issued an executive order on Protections and Connections for High Quality Natural Habitats. WDFW and WSDOT are seeking funding to undertake a Habitat Linkages project for Washington that builds on existing assessments. We will involve other agencies and stakeholders to ensure that the project serves multiple needs.

Priority Habitats and Species – The PHS list is in the process of being updated and NH staff provided information to add species and habitats and refine definitions. A guidance document for local governments, titled “Landscape Planning for Washington’s Fish and Wildlife”, will be distributed for review in November, and we would appreciate NH staff review as well.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES – Pene Speaks

During the last legislative session, the DNR received \$70 million in spending authority to acquire land to replace trust lands auctioned, sold or transferred for other land management purposes. The appropriation came with the requirement that the funds be used to purchase forest lands “under threat of conversion.” The department has been engaged in developing criteria and identifying potential areas for purchasing land that fits the legislative requirement. This has included working with DNR region land managers and stakeholders, such as Cascade Land Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, timber landowners and others, across the state. The result will be a plan to pursue acquisitions in areas that are under threat of development but that will be manageable as working forestland into the future. Clay Sprague in DNR’s policy section has been leading this effort.

The department is finalizing draft language for **Chapter 332-52 WAC, Public Access and Recreation on Lands Managed by the Department of Natural Resources**. The rule-making process is expected to be complete this spring and will include public meetings and hearings to review the proposed changes in the rules. The new rules will apply to DNR-managed natural areas as well as state trust lands.

The department is preparing for the upcoming legislative session and will have some request legislation and supplemental budget proposals. One budget request will be for recreation land stewards for areas of the state with high volumes of recreational use. The request is for just under \$500,000.