



How does DNR designate recreation lands that require a Discover Pass?

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages more than 3 million acres of forest, grazing and agriculture lands, including state trust lands and natural areas. Nearly 58 percent of these lands—or 1.9 million acres—require a Discover Pass for recreation access. These “designated” recreation lands comprise 74 major landscapes, 143 developed recreation facilities, 1,000 miles of developed trails, and opportunities for dispersed recreation.

What authority does DNR have to designate recreation lands?

The Multiple Use Act (RCW 79.10) gives DNR the authority to provide and designate areas for recreation. On June 30, 2011, Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark issued an order designating specific recreation areas that would require the Discover Pass.

How does DNR define ‘recreation site or land’?

The legislation that created the Discover Pass Legislature recognized that DNR develops both recreation facilities (campgrounds, trail systems, parking areas) and designates dispersed recreation areas on the trust lands it manages:

“Recreation site or lands” means a state park or fish and wildlife conservation sites including water access areas, boat ramps, wildlife areas, parking areas, roads, and trailheads, or department of natural resources developed *or designated recreation areas*, sites, trailheads, and parking areas.
[ESSB 5622, Sec. 2(7)]

What is DNR’s criteria for designating recreation lands?

DNR designates a recreation area if it meets **one or more** of the following criteria:

- Has an adopted “recreation area plan.”
- Has developed campgrounds, trails and trailheads, and dispersed recreation activities (hunting, gathering, fishing, geo-caching).
- Has documented trust land management costs resulting from documented recreation use/abuse including, but not limited to:
 - Recreational use beyond just the local recreationalists.
 - Frequent vandalism.
 - Chronic garbage dumping.
 - Numerous user-built trails, campgrounds and parking lots (unauthorized by DNR).
 - Damage to public resources and the environment.
 - Damage to trust land assets.

What is ‘dispersed’ recreation and why do these areas require a Discover Pass?

Recreational access on state trust lands is authorized under the multiple use act (RCW 79.10). “Dispersed” recreation occurs on lands open for recreational activities, even in areas not actively managed for recreation by DNR. Examples of dispersed recreation activities are hunting, fishing, geocaching, gathering, and wildlife and bird watching. DNR manages state trust lands primarily to generate income for the trust beneficiaries, including K-12 education and counties. Recreation in these areas is considered secondary to DNR’s main land management role. Providing access for dispersed recreation comes at a cost to trust beneficiaries as management funds are used to pay for damage from theft, vandalism, garbage dumping, and an estimated 3,000 miles of user-built trails. Funding from the Discover Pass is intended to cover these costs.

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