

Recreation & Conservation Reform

Maintaining recreation opportunities on **6.5 million acres of state lands** managed by the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

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Washington's recreation and conservation lands are integral to the overall quality of life in the state and are key reasons why visitors and businesses choose to come here.

These state lands:

- ▶ Generate more than \$9.6 billion of the state's economy annually.
- ▶ Are outdoor classrooms for our children.
- ▶ Will be available in perpetuity to hike, bike, ride horses and off-road vehicles, rock climb,

watch wildlife, hunt, and fish.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) are working together to request legislation that will shift the agencies' reliance away from unstable sources to more sustainable sources to help maintain Washington's quality of life and competitive edge in recruiting businesses and talent.

Sustainable funding will

enable both agencies to address maintenance backlogs for facilities and trails, provide safer recreation experiences, better protect state resources, and address critical land maintenance needs (such as fencing and invasive weed control).

Without this legislation, recreation and conservation opportunities on WDFW- and DNR-managed lands will be reduced and, in some places, eliminated.

RECREATION REFORM GOALS

- ▶ Keep state lands open for recreation access.
- ▶ Improve public safety on state lands.
- ▶ Conserve habitat and protect fish and wildlife.
- ▶ Improve local, rural economies.
- ▶ Enhance quality of life for current and future generations.
- ▶ Maintain existing state infrastructure for current and future generations.



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What's at stake?



Local economies.

Communities benefit from access to outdoor recreation opportunities, many of which are literally at their back door. Outdoor recreation provides jobs in these communities, many of which have few other employment opportunities. Local businesses such as outdoor outfitters, restaurants, hotels, and gas stations rely on revenues from the recreating public.



Annual Economic & Employment Benefits Related to Outdoor Recreation

	Sports fishing	Hunting	Wildlife viewing	Trail-based recreation
Economic Benefits	\$1.1 billion	\$313 million	\$1.5 billion	\$5.6 billion
No. of Participants	736,000	220,000	2.8 million	3 million



Public safety.

People deserve to be safe while visiting state lands. Crime on state lands is increasing, including drug operations, vandalism, and resource damage.



Conservation, clean water, healthy habitats, and outdoor classrooms.

Washington state lands provide clean water and protect habitats for fish and wildlife. But maintaining the environmental health of these areas is growing more difficult as ever-increasing numbers of visitors place additional pressure on state lands.



Trust assets that benefit future generations.

We must manage our lands so that the quality of life we pass on to future generations is enhanced, not diminished.



Access to state recreation and conservation lands.

Access and services could be further reduced or eliminated, affecting:

- ▶ State Wildlife Areas
- ▶ Hiking areas (Mount Si, Blanchard Mountain)
- ▶ Equestrian trails (Sahara Creek, Yacolt Burn State Forest)
- ▶ Natural Areas (Cypress Island, Mima Mounds)
- ▶ Campgrounds (Lake Spokane, Leader Lake)
- ▶ Water access sites for boaters, fishermen, and swimmers.
- ▶ Off-road trails (Tahuya State Forest, Sadie Creek)



Without this legislation, recreation and conservation opportunities on WDFW- and DNR-managed lands will be reduced and, in some places, eliminated.

Proposed solution

DNR and WDFW are jointly proposing legislation that will reduce the agencies' reliance on the State General Fund and grants, increase public safety, reduce backlogs of deferred maintenance, and better protect natural resources and habitats. The four main elements of this request will:



Establish an "Explore Washington Pass"

The pass will enable users to access state lands managed by both DNR and WDFW by paying one fee. The pass will apply to individuals 19 or older and will cost:

\$40 ... annual pass

\$ 5.... Holders of an annual hunting, fishing, or watchable wildlife decal.

\$10.... 1-day pass

\$15.... 2-day pass

\$20 ... 3-day pass

\$ 5.... per vehicle for vehicle access permit

The passes will be available through WDFW's automated licensing system. The Explore Washington Pass is estimated to generate \$5.5 million annually. DNR and WDFW will equally share the sales revenue from the passes.

ADDITIONAL DEALER AND TRANSACTIONS FEES—RANGING FROM \$2.50 TO \$6—WILL APPLY.



Authorize DNR to charge user fees and amend the agency's recreational immunity

For DNR to participate in the Explore Washington Pass, the Legislature needs to give DNR the authority to charge recreation user fees to access DNR-managed lands. In addition, the legislature will need to amend DNR's recreational immunity statute to reflect the same immunity as other state land management agencies that charge user fees.



Increase the cost of personalized license plates by \$10 to help generate an estimated \$1.3 million in additional revenue each biennium. This revenue will be dedicated to watchable wildlife opportunities and conservation work for threatened and endangered and non-hunted species on WDFW lands.



Improve law enforcement and public safety on state lands

through increased efficiencies in law enforcement. Grant reciprocal enforcement authority to WDFW, DNR, and Washington State Parks law enforcement officers. Authorize the state to recoup the costs of correcting damage to state lands through vandalism, theft, and other illegal activities.

With sustainable and dedicated funding we can:



Sustain local economies

by maintaining and improving access to outdoor recreation opportunities.



Improve public safety

by providing adequate law enforcement staffing and reciprocal enforcement authority among state natural resource agencies.



Address backlogs of much-needed maintenance on trails and facilities.

Maintain current investments in trails, toilets, campgrounds, parking lots, and signs.



Better protect water quality, conserve natural resources and ensure healthy habitats.

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Sustainable and dedicated funding is key

The state's General Fund is eroding, and grant funding is unstable.

DNR and WDFW need sustainable, dedicated funding to continue to provide safe and enjoyable recreation opportunities for the public.

Popular recreation activities on state lands

- ▶ Bird watching
- ▶ Boating
- ▶ Camping
- ▶ Canoeing, kayaking
- ▶ Cross-country skiing
- ▶ Dog training
- ▶ Equestrian
- ▶ Fishing
- ▶ Geocaching
- ▶ Hang gliding / paragliding
- ▶ Hiking
- ▶ Hunting
- ▶ Mountain biking
- ▶ Off-road vehicle riding
- ▶ Snowmobiling
- ▶ Snowshoeing
- ▶ Water skiing
- ▶ Wildlife viewing

Vandalism, theft and other crime on state lands

Crime on state lands is on the rise, putting public safety and the health of natural resources at risk. Many recreation areas are plagued by illegal dumping, vandalism, drug operations, graffiti, and resource theft.



Illegal dumping and littering are all too common on state lands.



Bigger items such as cars, refrigerators, and other appliances are also left on state lands.



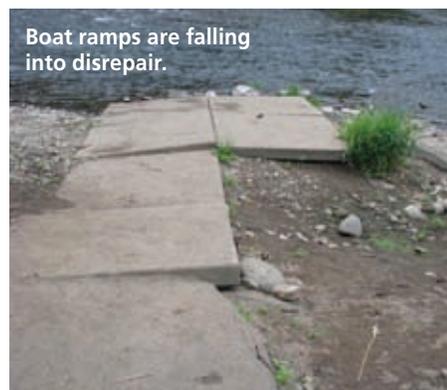
Theft of boughs can kill trees, which reduces revenue for trust beneficiaries.



Replacement costs due to vandalism continue to increase.

Deferred maintenance

Both DNR and WDFW have long lists of much-needed maintenance projects that need to be addressed for the sake of public safety and protection of resources.



Boat ramps are falling into disrepair.



Even before the tree fell, this bridge needed replacing due to rotten timbers.