

February 10, 2023

Dear Representatives Tharinger, Callan, Hackney, Steele, Abbarno and Sandlin:

The 13 undersigned organizations are writing to respectfully request your support of the Department of Natural Resources' Sustainable Recreation and Natural Areas funding requests.

Washington state is blessed with some of the most iconic places to recreate in the country – if not the world. With hiking trails just steps away from the backyards of many communities, the quality of recreational experiences that we have are unparalleled and the reason that many seek to move here. This is why more than 90% of Washingtonians recreate outside annually. Our trails and state recreation lands are the way for people to access the natural world and have many benefits that also extend beyond recreation, including improving health outcomes and driving the state's economy.

In recent years, DNR's recreation program has witnessed a dramatic increase in use as more and more people head to the outdoors. Between 2019 and 2020, DNR experienced a 21% growth in visitation, accounting for more than 20 million visitor days annually. To keep up with this demand and increase responsible recreation while reducing environmental impacts, our XX organizations ask for your support of DNR's funding request for the following:

Promoting Safe and Responsible Recreation (Agency Request: \$5.8M per biennium, capital):

Investments are needed throughout Washington state to improve recreational access through wayfinding and tribal interpretive signage, trail bridge installation and trailhead facilities. Key projects include implementing the 2019 Baker to Bellingham nonmotorized recreation plan and improving recreation infrastructure in the Morning Star Conservation Area. (*Governor's budget funded at \$2.39m*)

Natural Areas Facilities Preservation and Access (Agency Request: \$5.1m per biennium, capital):

Natural areas provide world-class recreation opportunities on DNR lands, including Morning Star, Rattlesnake Mountain, Middle Fork Snoqualmie, Mount Si and Tiger Mountain. (*Governor's budget funded at \$4.01m.*)

Funding at the agency request levels will ensure that critical projects move forward on DNR's recreation lands. **Currently, more than a dozen public access and recreations projects will go unfunded if the agency's budget requests are not met including:**

- **LD 5 & 12:** Trailhead and trail improvements at Mount Si and West Tiger Mountain Natural Resource Conservation Areas; equestrian trail connections at Tiger Mountain
- **LD 12, 13 & 14:** Green Dot road system updates, including elevation based gates to improve winter recreation access
- **LD 13:** Public access improvements in for Coleman/Naneum, reflected in the Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation and Access Plan
- **LD 14 & 18:** Miscellaneous trail and facility modernization, including bridge replacements

- **LD 24:** Trail development and ORV upgrades at Sadie and Foothills
- **LD 24:** Campground upgrades including picnic tables, fire rings, ADA fishing dock and signage at Olympic region campgrounds such as Willoughby, Bear Creek and Lyre River

Please support these incredibly important outdoor recreation and trails programs that fund countless projects across the state. Funding recreation lands will help support Washington's outdoor industry and ensure that responsible recreation is fostered on state lands and trails.

Thank you for your support of the great outdoors and for recognizing and tackling the need to fund our parks and trails.

Sincerely,

Andrea Imler
Advocacy Director
Washington Trails Association

Jacqueline Reyes
Program Manager
The Wilderness Society

Betsy Robblee
Conservation & Advocacy Director, The Mountaineers
Washington Program Manager, Outdoor Alliance

Amy Brockhaus
Deputy Director
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

Dana Chambers
President
Back Country Horsemen of Washington

Yvonne Kraus
Executive Director
Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance

Peter Steelquist
Washington Policy Manager
The Surfrider Foundation

Nicky Pasi
Facilitator
East Cascades Recreation Partnership

Douglas Kilgore
Private Citizen - Roslyn, WA

Thomas O'Keefe
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director
American Whitewater

Bill Essman
President
Kittitas County Field & Stream Club

Kevin Clements
Habitat Chairman
Ruffed Grouse Society Washington Chapter

Tom Bugert
State & Local Government Affairs
REI co-op