



April 5, 2023

Dear Senators Rolfe, Robinson, Wilson and Gildon and Representatives Ormsby, Bergquist, Gregerson, Macri, Stokesbary, Chambers and Corry:

Outdoor Alliance Washington and the 17 undersigned elected officials, organizations, and businesses are writing to thank you for your support of funding in the Senate and House operating budgets to better manage recreational use of state public lands and waters.

In response to growing concern about the impact of increased visitation to public lands and waters on natural and cultural resources, the Governor’s office and the three state land management agencies (Washington State Parks, Department of Natural Resources, and Department of Fish and Wildlife) requested funding to launch a collaborative effort to improve recreation management and safeguard ecological integrity across state lands.

This effort is intended to be collaborative in nature, working across government silos and calling on the strengths and expertise of each department. The costs for this were reflected in the individual funding requests put forward by the agencies and included in the Governor's budget. This unique collaborative approach would allow the agencies to coordinate recreation management on a landscape-scale approach to more effectively protect sensitive natural and cultural ecosystems and optimize use across state lands.

We are concerned that the Senate and House operating budgets do not fully fund this work, which puts the overall objectives at risk. A lack of sufficient funding would slow down the work, limit meaningful Tribal engagement, and forgo on-the-ground work to assess and protect resources currently being impacted by high use levels.

We respectfully urge you to fund DNR Recreation Lands and Cultural Resources at the Senate proposed level of \$7.78 million in the final 2023-2025 operating budget. We also urge you to fund State Parks’ Ecological Assessment and DFW’s Ecological Assessment at the House proposed level of \$1,194,000 and \$982,000 respectively in the final budget.

While these funding levels are less than the Governor’s funding request, they will allow the agencies to begin to address the concerns of Tribes and stakeholders through the following actions:

- State Parks, DNR, and DFW will work jointly and collaborate with Tribal governments to develop a methodology and framework for monitoring, and adaptively managing recreation impacts on the ecological condition of state land. Funding at the Senate proposed level for DNR and the House proposed level for State Parks and DFW will allow the agencies to collaborate with Tribes and develop the necessary tools, and allow for modest application and testing of the tools where needed most.
- DNR will hire additional law enforcement to better protect our public lands, waters, and cultural resources. Funding at the Senate proposed level for DNR will allow the agency to hire ten additional law enforcement officers.
- DNR will establish a long-term outdoor access and recreation plan to set goals and measure outcomes for safe, responsible public access and recreation use on DNR lands and waters. Funding at the Senate proposed level for DNR will allow the agency to complete their first-ever statewide recreation plan.

Together, this funding will help address our shared concerns of the growing impact of outdoor recreation and other stressors on the sustainability of natural and cultural resources. Thank you for your support of this important investment.

Sincerely,

Fred Felleman
Commissioner
Port of Seattle

Andrea Imler
Advocacy Director
Washington Trails Association

Christine Mahler
Executive Director
Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition

Tom Bugert
State and Local Government Affairs Manager
REI Co-op

Yvonne Kraus
Executive Director
Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance

Tom Uniack
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Kurt Hellmann
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Thomas O'Keefe
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Peter Steelquist
Washington Policy Manager
Surfrider Foundation

Eddie Espinosa
Director, Community Programs
American Alpine Club

Ty Tyler
Stewardship Director
Access Fund

Amy Brockhaus
Deputy Director
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

Megan Birzell
Washington State Director
The Wilderness Society

Sept Gernez
Acting Chapter Director
WA State Sierra Club

John Floberg
Executive Director
Washington State Parks Foundation

Ted Jackson
President
Washington ATV Association

Sarah Dyr Dahl
Northwest Region Director
American Rivers