

(Submitted online to the Senate Ways & Means Committee)

Thank you Chair Robinson and members of the Committee, my name is Conor Marshall and I am submitting written testimony on PSSB 5167 on behalf of The Mountaineers, signed in as other.

The Mountaineers is an non-profit outdoor education and recreation organization that connects youth and adults to the outdoors through recreational activities, including on Washington's state-managed public lands.

These state parks, recreation, and wildlife areas provide both residents and visitors transformational outdoor experiences, positive health and wellness benefits, and connection to the natural world that fosters a stewardship ethic for our shared lands and waters.

At a time when federal public lands are under threat and under-resourced, as state land managers face growing backlogs of deferred maintenance, and visitation to our state lands continues to rise, it's critically important to adequately fund our three state land management agencies.

Maintaining integral investments in these agencies in the final 2025-27 operating budget will allow land managers to continue to address maintenance and operations needs on their lands, manage recreation sustainably, and protect natural and cultural resources for all.

Maintenance and Operations Funding for State Land Managers

Thank you for including \$7.5 million in ongoing maintenance and operations (M&O) funding for Washington State Parks (State Parks), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). First passed in 2022, this ongoing \$10 million M&O investment has become a significant percentage of each agency's maintenance and operations spending: 20% for State Parks, 40% for DNR, and nearly 50% for DFW.

We ask that the Committee include the full \$10 million per agency in the final Senate operating budget to ensure these lands can thrive and the experiences they provide can endure into the future.

Funding for State Agencies and Tribes to Study and Address Recreation Impacts

Thank you for including \$724,000 for State Parks and \$984,000 DFW to continue to support the State-Tribal Recreation Impacts Initiative (STRII) process. These resources will help fund the STRII technical work group and help develop a statewide data management system to help all three land management agencies and tribes study, measure, and mitigate impacts to natural and cultural resources on state lands - the ancestral homelands of Native peoples.

We are concerned, though, at the lack of funding of the \$3.4 million in tribal capacity grants to support the engagement of Tribes in the STRII process. This funding was included in Governor Inslee's proposed operating budget under the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and was proposed to be funded using Climate Commitment Act funding.

Funding to Connect Underserved Youth to the Outdoors

Washington's No Child Left Inside (NCLI) grant program has connected more than 154,000 underserved youth to the outdoors. We're concerned about the lack of funding for this critical program in PSSB 5167. Completely eliminating NCLI places the state budget burdens on our communities and most importantly, youth. We ask that you fund NCLI at the proposed House level of \$3.375 million, so the program can continue to support the efforts of organizations like The Mountaineers to connect our state's underserved youth to outdoor experiences.

Thank you for considering our support of these important funding requests to restore public lands, manage sustainable recreation, and connect underserved youth to nature in the final 2025-2027 Senate operating budget.