

November 17, 2025

The Honorable Bob Ferguson  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: Protect Maintenance and Operations on Recreation Lands

Dear Governor Ferguson:

The nine undersigned organizations are writing to thank you for your work to ensure that Washingtonians can enjoy our state parks and recreation lands. The budget you signed this year protected funding for maintenance and operations at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) and Washington State Parks to help address the backlog of maintenance on recreation lands. The 2025-2027 operating budget provides \$7.5M per agency (down from \$10M in the 2023-2025 budget) to state land managers to invest in recreation lands and ensure public access to the outdoors. As you prepare your budget for the supplemental session, our organizations ask that you continue to ensure our state recreation lands are well managed and safe to enjoy by protecting funding for Recreation Lands Maintenance.

As you know, Washington is a great place to work, live and play, and our state parks and recreation lands provide some of the best opportunities in the nation to access the outdoors. More than 90% of Washingtonians recreate outside, and with the state's population projected to grow to approximately 9.9 million by 2050 (a 28% increase), we must be prepared to meet current and future needs. Recreation lands are tremendously important to our quality of life and to our state's economy. Outdoor recreation supports 5.4 percent of the state's employment (237,000 jobs).

During the past few years, estimated visits to some state lands have increased by more than 100%. With more people getting outside and demand expected to grow, we need to maintain our investment in public lands. This is especially important in 2026. Washington is projected to welcome more than 750,000 extra visitors next year as a result of hosting World Cup matches in the state. These visitors will come during the late spring and early summer when many federally managed lands remain covered in snow. As such, lower elevation state parks and recreation lands will absorb a spike in visitation from travelers from around the world.

Recreation lands maintenance funding is critically important to state agencies. Previous investments in deferred maintenance have enabled agencies to undertake high priority projects as well as plan, manage and monitor recreation lands. Current funding to address the maintenance backlog is a significant percentage of each agency's total maintenance spending. **We estimate that this funding is about 20% of the maintenance funding for State Parks, 40% for DNR and nearly 50% for WDFW.** Further cuts to the

current funding level would significantly impact our state government's ability to maintain recreation lands.

We deeply appreciate the investment made by the current budget. We request your continued support of this important funding as it has already provided critical improvements to recreation lands across Washington and with your support, will continue to do so into the future.

Sincerely,

Jaime Loucky  
CEO, Washington Trails Association

Thomas O'Keefe  
Director of Policy and Science, American Whitewater

Eddie Espinosa  
Executive Director, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance

Renee Tkach  
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Washington Policy Manager, Surfrider Foundation

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cc:

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