

January 19, 2026

RE: Protect Recreation Lands Maintenance Funding

Dear Senators Robinson, Stanford and Gildon:

In recent years, the legislature has made critical investments in our state parks and recreation lands. The 2025-27 operating budget you passed last year provided \$7.5M in funding per agency for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) and Washington State Parks to help address the backlog of maintenance on their recreation lands. While this was at a reduced level from the previous biennium (down 25% from \$10M per agency in the 2023-2025 budget), the continued funding is key to state land managers ability to invest in facilities and ensure public access to the outdoors. The 13 undersigned organizations are writing to highlight the critical importance of this funding for our state parks and recreation lands. Our organizations write to request that you **maintain the \$7.5M per agency funding level for Recreation Lands Maintenance contained in the enacted budget.**

As you know, Washington is a great place to live, work and play. Our state parks and recreation lands provide some of the best opportunities in the nation to access the outdoors.

- 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).
- 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.

The Governor's proposed supplemental budget contains significant cuts to funding for Recreation Lands Maintenance, which provides resources needed to ensure access to outdoor recreation. The Governor's budget reduces this funding by \$500K at State Parks, \$750K at DNR and \$1.5M at WDFW. These reductions would hurt our collective ability to preserve existing infrastructure and invest in recreation lands. Such cuts would also layer on top of broader maintenance-level cuts the agencies faced during the 2025-2027 biennium. During the past few years, estimated visits to some state lands have increased by more than 100%. In addition to general growth in outdoor recreation, this year Washington will welcome more than 750,000 visitors from around the world as our state hosts World Cup matches. This is an important opportunity for Washington to share our outstanding outdoor recreation resources with visitors. We need maintained recreation sites, open trails and welcoming visitor facilities. We must preserve our state recreation lands.

Our organizations request your continued support of this important funding at its enacted level. Recreation Lands Maintenance provides critical improvements to recreation lands across Washington, and with your support, will continue to do so into the future.

Sincerely,

Kindra Ramos
Chief Program Officer
Washington Trails Association

Yvonne Kraus
Executive Director
Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition

Thomas O'Keefe
Director of Policy and Science
American Whitewater

Bryan Peterson
President
Washington Off Highway Vehicle Alliance

Jeff Chapman
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Back Country Horsemen of Washington

Hanne Beener
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Eddie Espinosa
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Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance

Jon Hoekstra
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Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

Marc Toenyan
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Northwest Motorcycle Association

Nichol Phillips
Washington State Executive Director
Pacific Northwest 4-Wheel Drive Association

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