

September 4, 2014

RE: Governor's Taskforce on Outdoor Recreation Draft Report



The Mountaineers

Dear Taskforce Committee,

The Mountaineers thanks all the members of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation and the Recreation and Conservation Office for engaging the public, compiling recommendations, and completing the draft report. This is no easy task to take on in such a short timeline. We would like to reiterate the points we supported in the letter as part of Outdoor Alliance Washington, and add our support of the points outlined in the Federal Lands section.

The mission of The Mountaineers is to enrich the community by helping people explore, conserve, learn about and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond. Formed in 1906, we have been getting people of all ages outside safely and responsibly for over 100 years. We are passionate about building a community of people who are knowledgeable and care about the outdoors. We work to preserve the wild backcountry where we play for many generations to come.

From the Outdoor Alliance Washington comments:

We would like to further acknowledge our support for the following Task Force recommendations:

- *Establishing an office to serve as the state's cross-agency leader on outdoor recreation*
- *Establishing a single multi-entity pass to recreate on state and federal lands in Washington*
- *Addressing the issue of permitting for commercial users and nonprofit organizations*
- *Outlining of alternative revenue sources for outdoor recreation programs*
- *Continuing to fund and protect current outdoor recreation grant programs*

We recognize that the report can only summarize the diverse range of recommendations. However, we would like to see further information or greater acknowledgement of the following topics:

- **Land Closures** (pg 13): *While this section acknowledges closures on some public lands, the recommendations only address private lands. Incentives, such as public-private partnerships on state lands to support stewardship and access, can be a viable solution on public lands as well. This topic is addressed in part on federal lands regarding road closures, but similar road closures that hinder recreational access also exist on state lands. Regarding incentives for private landowners, while some nominal fees for allowing access on private lands may be appropriate, the state's recreational use statute is designed to encourage free public access on private land. Providing the same level of liability protection for landowners that charge fees may undermine this purpose.*
- **Government Planning** (pg 13): *Planning is a key component of managing public lands and recreation. We ask that the Task Force recommend that planners also partner with nonprofit organizations. Collectively, our organizations bring decades of experience in planning, recreational improvements, and user education as well as significant outreach support to Washington's growing human-powered recreational base.*

- ***Seek greater opportunities for partnerships with nonprofit organizations to leverage outdoor recreation resources:*** We recommend that the Task Force highlight the importance of strengthening partnerships with outdoor recreation organizations. Outdoor Alliance Washington's organizations provide substantial support to state land agencies that manage recreational opportunities. The possibility exists to increase these partnerships. For example, the broad priority near-term actions under "Inspire an Outdoor Recreation Culture," (pg 11) "Sustainable Our Outdoor Recreation Assets" (pg 7) could include recommendations to work with nonprofit organizations who are already providing outdoor recreation content (such as online hiking, biking, climbing and kayaking information) and programs (such as trail maintenance and youth engagement in the outdoors) that get people and kids outside. Partnering with nonprofit organizations can leverage limited resources and minimize duplicative efforts statewide.

Further, The Mountaineers expresses our support of the three main suggestions made in the Federal Lands section of the draft report.

- We share concern for how road closures on federal land not only affect recreational access, but can also affect the recreation economies of gateway communities. We have been involved in supporting the recreation economy of Darrington, as well as being involved in the Big Tent coalition, as these issues are important to our organization.
- Even the most in-tune recreationists are often confused by what pass is needed for outdoor recreation areas. Coordination with all land managers in Washington to create a single pass would improve people's outdoor experiences as well as encourage more people to get outside.
- As this report makes clear, the outdoors is a foundation of our state. Access, or lack thereof, to get folks outside negatively affects the outdoor experience here. We enthusiastically support the Task Force's recommendations around permitting on Forest Service lands here in Washington State.

Lastly, we would like to enthusiastically support the No Child Left Inside grant program and outdoor recreation as part of Washington's K-12 core curriculum, as we undertake significant youth programming and work in partnership with a lot of Seattle schools.

Thank you for considering our second round of input and we sincerely appreciate your leadership in transforming Washington's outdoor recreational assets and state programs.

Sincerely,

Martinique Grigg, *Executive Director*