



A Message from the Governor

April 9, 2014

Welcome and thank you for your willingness to serve on this task force to help the great state of Washington.

I selected each of you for your specific interest and expertise in outdoor recreation. I am giving you a tough challenge and a short timeframe, but I am confident that the creative minds I have assembled will deliver a great vision and plan of action.

I grew up in Washington and have many memories of my parents piling us kids in the back of a station wagon and heading to Mount Rainier for a day of hiking. I want that to be a typical experience, not the exception, for kids growing up in Washington today. Those trips created a lifelong love of the outdoors and taught me a lot. Most important, it taught me about life and the interconnections between nature and humans. If our kids don't understand this fragile connection, how will they be able to take care of it when they grow up, enter our workforce and have children of their own?

As you embark on the challenge laid out in my executive order, I want you to focus on three things:

1. Help us come up with stable funding ideas for our beloved state parks. They've had a rocky few years, and none of us want to see parks close. We need to figure out how to provide a stable funding base so they can stay open and host the very families we want to get outside. I also want you to think about what role the state should play in helping our local parks maintain the opportunities and services they provide.
2. How do we promote our outdoor recreation amenities so we can get more people outside and get more visitors coming to Washington? How do we grow our tourism industry and support the outdoor recreation industry in Washington?
3. This is probably the most important thing: What's the best way to get children outside – for their mental, physical, and emotional health, as well as their education? As you know, the number of children struggling with obesity is climbing. We need to figure out a way to stop that. We need to get them outside. We also need to instill a lifelong love of the outdoors now so they will be good stewards when they grow up.

In Washington, we are blessed with many beautiful forests, mountains, lakes, and rivers. We have a thriving outdoor recreation industry that generates \$22 billion in consumer spending, 227,000 direct jobs in this state, \$7.1 billion in wages and salaries, and \$1.6 billion in state and local tax revenue. Yet, despite all of that, many of our parks are underused. We have people traveling here but no tourism office to help direct them. And we have businesses that are set up and ready to go and just need more customers. Sadly, we've closed our state tourism office just at the time when we needed it most. How do we change this around?

I know that I've given you a tough challenge and a short deadline, but these are big issues and we need big ideas to help us figure them out. Thank you again for your leadership. I'll be very excited to see the vision you lay out for the future of Washington parks.

Very truly yours,

Jay Inslee
Governor