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**Wildlife &
Recreation**
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July 10, 2018

Ted Willhite, Chair
Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
1111 Washington Street SE
Olympia, Washington 98501

SUBJECT: COALITION'S RECOMMENDATION FOR WWRP 2019-21 FUNDING LEVEL

Dear Chair Willhite:

Last month, the Board of Directors of the Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition voted unanimously to request \$130 million in appropriations for the Washington Wildlife & Recreation Program for the 2019-21 biennium. I am writing on behalf of the Coalition to ask the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to support our funding recommendation.

First, I would like to thank you and the other members of the RCFB for your previous support of robust WWRP funding and your efforts to make the Program more accessible to all Washingtonians. The Coalition is grateful to be a partner in your work to ensure that the WWRP continues to be a nationally recognized, equitable, cost-effective, and successful program that will improve Washington's quality of life for generations to come.

As in prior years, the Coalition developed its funding request through a deliberative process, considering several indicators of WWRP needs. Our Board's objective is to seek funding levels that are at the same time aspirational and justifiable, and which will sustain our existing recreation and conservation areas, while also responding to growing need. We considered the following indicators and highlighted two additional factors, population growth and increased demand, in developing our recommendation.

- **Indicator 1: Original WWRP funding level adjusted for inflation.** This adjustment would suggest a 2019-21 appropriation of **\$108.5 million**.
- **Indicator 2: WWRP appropriation as a percentage of total bond funding capacity.** Since the 1991-93 biennium, the average total percentage of the state's total bond capacity appropriated to the WWRP has been 4.12 percent. For the 2019-21 biennium, the available bond capacity is currently projected to be \$3.1 billion, which would suggest a WWRP appropriation of **\$128.89 million**.
- **Indicator 3: WWRP requests adjusted for state REET collections.** Since 1990, annual state real estate excise tax (REET) collections, which are roughly correlated to increases in land values, have increased at an average linear rate of about 7.4 percent. This rate of increase would suggest a 2019-21 WWRP funding request of **\$128.88 million**.
- **Indicator 4: WWRP requests per capita, adjusted for 2018 dollars.** Since 1989, the average funding request made by the RCO for WWRP has been \$19.16 per Washington resident (adjusted for inflation). The estimated state population for 2019-21 is 7.74 million, which would suggest a WWRP appropriation of **\$148.3 million**.

*Deceased

POPULATION GROWTH

Our state's population growth has accelerated in recent years, **adding almost a quarter of a million people in the last two years alone**. Meanwhile, research has consistently shown the importance of outdoor access on childhood development, academic performance in school, and the mental and physical health of people of all ages. Unfortunately, the state is not keeping pace with the needs of this growing population.

Population growth has also driven up the cost of land. For example, **the average price of farmland has increased 25 percent in the last year alone, and is up 47 percent in the last four years**. Funding for the WWRP must increase to simply maintain purchasing power and it is important that we preserve these valuable natural areas and working lands now before prices increase even more.

This growing population also impacts our environment. Some of the Northwest's most iconic plant and animal species are in rapid decline due to habitat loss and fragmentation, declining water quality, and ecosystem degradation. **Between 2001 and 2011, Washington lost 292,152 acres of natural areas to development**. Now more than ever, robustly funding the WWRP—the state's primary means of conserving native ecosystems and important wildlife habitat—is critical to protecting the diverse lands and iconic species that are integral to our state's identity and our environmental health.

INCREASED DEMAND

As our cities and towns get more crowded, opportunities to get outside are imperative to maintaining our quality of life—both in the city and outside of it. Indeed, the demand for outdoor recreation in Washington has never been higher. For example, **annual Discover Pass sales have increased by 55 percent over the last five years**. Investing in the WWRP ensures that our parks, trails, and water access points are maintained and improved to meet increased demand and that additional opportunities are created to avoid overcrowding.

Local communities are stepping up to meet this demand, as demonstrated by the significant increase in WWRP applications. As you know, **273 applications requesting \$197 million were submitted in 2018, compared to 238 applications requesting \$163 million in 2016**. Without increased WWRP funding, many of these communities' highest priority conservation and recreation needs will not be met.

The new match reduction policy is also increasing demand for the program while making it more equitable for communities across the state. The WWRP has always been a key tool for underserved communities to secure much-needed funding for parks and recreation facilities. The match reduction policy will give even more communities the ability to create critical green spaces for kids and families to enjoy. Communities have responded well to this exciting new policy: in the current grant round **55 projects qualified for the match reduction to improve program equity**, including 3 new WWRP sponsors.

RECOMMENDATION

Bearing all these factors in mind, the Coalition Board of Directors respectfully requests that the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board join it in requesting \$130 million in funding for the WWRP grant program in the 2019-21 Capital Budget. Thank you again for all your work on behalf of the WWRP.

Respectfully,



Adrian Miller
Board Chair



Washington
**Wildlife &
Recreation**
COALITION

**Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition
Board Resolution No. 2018-05**

**SUBJECT: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)
Funding Level Request for 2019-21 Biennium**

WHEREAS, the Coalition believes that preserving Washington's natural resources and investing in public recreational opportunities are essential to the long-term health and wellbeing of our residents, our diverse ecosystems, and our state and local economies;

WHEREAS, our state's continued population growth brings with it a relentless demand for more recreational opportunities, while also bringing a range of threats to wildlife habitat and green spaces;

WHEREAS, outdoor recreation supports 201,000 jobs in our state and generates \$26.2 billion in consumer spending annually;

WHEREAS, the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) is a key tool for underserved communities to secure funding for parks and recreation facilities;

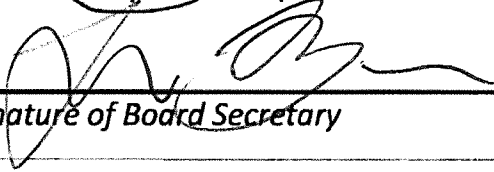
WHEREAS, the WWRP is the state's largest source of funding for local parks and trails;

WHEREAS, the WWRP is the state's primary tool for conserving native ecosystems, important wildlife habitat, and farmland;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Coalition seek a capital budget appropriation for the WWRP in the amount of \$130m for the 2019-21 biennium.

Resolution moved by: *Tam Vogl*
Resolution seconded by: *Bill Chapman*
Resolution was (circle one):

Adopted → Adopted as Amended – Defeated – Deferred



6-19-18

Signature of Board Secretary

Date



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Rachel Young
Councilmember,
City of Lacey

July 2, 2018

Chairperson
Washington State Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
PO Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

RE: Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, South Sound Prairies 2018 Critical Habitat Grant Application (RCO Project #18-1333A)

Dear Chairperson and Board Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the above referenced proposal. The Thurston Economic Development Council (EDC) is the lead economic development agency for Thurston County as designated by the Thurston County Board of Commissioners; and is recognized as the Associate Development Organization (ADO) by the Washington State Department of Commerce. The EDC has a long and proactive history in working with the City of Tenino as well as all of the communities that comprise the south Thurston County region. We have been an active and engaged partner with the City as it looks to ensure that its future has every opportunity for a vibrant and successful future for its region and the region that surrounds it. As such, we are providing this letter of support for the application for a grant in the critical habitat category to purchase property in and around the City of Tenino.

The City of Tenino notified us of the Department's intention because Tenino has a vested interest in the economic and community development opportunities and possibilities represented by the property that is under consideration. This proposal envisions the purchase of approximately 1600 acres, 270 of which are within the Tenino City limits.

At a stakeholder meeting organized by WDWF staff, the EDC and partners discussed the economic and community development interests and strategies with the concurrence of the City – these concepts that were focused on future sustainable development, were well-received by the Department. As a result, the Department is attempting to craft the grant request in such a way that certain parcels within the total area would remain available for land uses that are compatible and in-keeping with the City's long range plans. Please know that these were in accordance with the WDWF's desires as well. We are especially appreciative of the way in which the department's proposal could fit into the development of the SW Washington Agriculture-Innovation Park. This is an effort involving over 30 stakeholders and communities in the region.

With these interests in mind, we thank you for your positive consideration of this proposal. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if we can provide any further comment and or input.

Sincerely,


Michael Cade

Executive Director

RECEIVED

JUL 16 2018

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