



Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account



Recreation and Conservation Office

PO Box 40917
Olympia WA 98504-0917
Telephone: (360) 902-3000
Telephone for the Hearing Impaired: (800) 833-6388
E-mail: info@rco.wa.gov
Web: <https://rco.wa.gov/>

Who May Apply?

- Local governments
- Special purpose districts
- State agencies
- Tribes

Types of Projects Funded

- Land acquisition
- Development
- Restoration

Funding Source

The state Department of Natural Resources manages 2.6 million acres of state-owned aquatic land and generates revenue for this grant program through activities such as leasing land for marinas, public ports, restaurants, utilities, and aquaculture, and selling harvest rights for shellfish.

Leveraging State Dollars

Grant recipients must provide at least 50 percent in matching resources.

Opening Washington's Shorelines to the Public

Most beaches and shorelines in Washington are privately owned. Only one-fifth of the state's shorelines are open to the public.

Yet, water activities are the fifth most popular outdoor activity for Washingtonians.¹ That means that all too often, people must crowd onto the few public beaches or wait in long lines at public boat launches.



Boaters crowd the beach at Quilomene Bar near Ellensburg.

Crowding and over-use can damage the natural environment, causing Washingtonians to "love to death" the few places open to the public.

Purpose

In 1984, the Washington Legislature created the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) to buy and develop places where people can enjoy the waterfront. The account also ensures that revenue generated from the use of state-owned aquatic lands is re-invested to protect and improve those lands.

Protecting and Improving Shorelines

ALEA grants may be used for acquiring, restoring, or improving aquatic lands for public purposes. The grants also may be used to provide or improve interpretation and public access to those lands and associated waters.

Contributing to the Economy

Washington's aquatic lands are rich in natural resources and have great commercial, recreational, and aesthetic value.

People participating in water activities, including boating, fishing, paddling, and harvesting shellfish, spend \$12 billion in Washington on equipment, travel, lodging, entrance fees, food, and other related items.² Conserving and re-investing in shorelines will ensure a vibrant economy, a healthy environment, and great places for Washingtonians to recreate.

Funding Only the Best Projects

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board accepts applications for ALEA projects in even-numbered years. Committees made of up people knowledgeable in aquatic land issues score the projects based on criteria established by the board and submit a ranked list to the board for consideration. The grant process is open and competitive, ensuring only the best projects are funded. The board submits a prioritized list of projects to the Governor and Legislature for funding.



The City of Gig Harbor used a \$500,000 ALEA grant to develop a waterfront park, a shoreline boardwalk, and a street-level overlook with seating and spectacular views of the harbor.

¹Amanda C. Ritchie et al., "Outdoor Recreation in Washington: The 2013 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan," Responsive Management, Harrisonburg, VA, May 2013, pp. 160-165.

²Mojica, J., Fletcher, A., 2020, "Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State, 2020 Update." Earth Economics, Tacoma, WA, pp. 33-37.

Aquatic Lands Defined

Aquatic lands lie at the bottom of navigable water bodies, such as Puget Sound and the Columbia River, and include the surrounding shore lands, harbor areas, and tidelands.

Current Projects

To see the current projects, visit:
<https://bit.ly/3zvfRf7>