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Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Remarks

Dear friends, colleagues and fellow outdoor enthusiasts,

I'm sorry that I am unable to be here in person. As many of you know, I am and will continue to be a strong supporter of recreation and conservation efforts in our state. The outdoors has always played a significant part in my life, whether it's in my work in the agricultural world or support and frequent use of trails with my horses. It's a way of life that benefits so many in our state and in many ways is part of our identity in the Western states.

Washington is blessed with so much biological diversity, and the work of the Recreation and Conservation office is invaluable in preserving this natural wonder for future generations of Washingtonians and visitors from around the world.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with ideas on how we can continue to support valuable conservation work.

Sincerely,

September 16, 2019

To: RCO Funding Board

From: Fred Wert

Re: WWRP Trails Category Funding Cap

I request that that the RCO Funding Board cap the WWRP Trails Category funding levels. The lack of a cap over the history of the WWRP has meant that many projects have never received funding because a few projects used a majority of the available funds.

History

As a founding member of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition I was there when the legislation was written and when the original division of funds was created. I suggested that there be a category for "trails" separate from "local parks". This was due partly to the fact that there were very few local agencies working on low land trails at that time and there was no dedicated funding for these trails. That has changed significantly since 1990 as witnessed by the huge applications to the trails category each biennium.

The purpose of the WWRP is to provide some funding for agencies to assist them in the acquisition of recreation and habitat land and development of recreation facilities. The entire program with its categories, criteria, and project ranking was to facilitate the success of the best projects. It was never intended to be the sole funding for projects.

Current situation

Over time the size of projects and the estimate costs have risen significantly for trails projects as agencies have become bolder in their project scopes. Larger agencies naturally have the fiscal capacity to plan for larger projects. In the early days of the WWRP the project requests in the trails category were not large and most of the larger agencies only requested a maximum of \$500,000. This has changed over time resulting in fewer projects being funded.

This natural inequity in capacity between larger and smaller agencies has been acknowledged by RCO's adoption of a sliding scale of required match for disadvantaged communities. This greatly helps in a community being able to afford the match, but the criteria for a lower match is NOT included in the criteria for ranking projects. The result is that an agency could only have a 10% match requirement, but not make the cut because larger agencies have requested a large portion of the entire trails category allocation. Many of these large projects rank higher because they do well in criteria such as population served, growth management compliance, connecting to other trails, and design. If the goal of instituting a sliding match was to increase the number of communities that receive funding, then the implementation of the disadvantaged communities initiative supports my request to do the same for the trails category.

2015

Trail Projects

Type	Project Name	Applicant	Leg Dist	County	WWRP Funding	Applicant Match
Dev	Spruce Railroad McFee Tunnel Restoration	Clallam Co Public Works Dept	24	Clallam	\$ 460,000	\$ 460,000
Dev	East Lake Sammamish Trail-Samm A Construction	King County DNR & Parks	41	King	\$ 500,000	\$ 2,980,000
Comb	Twisp Community Trail Project	Twisp Town of	12	Okanogan	\$ 199,504	\$ 201,650
Dev	Squalicum Creek Trail	Bellingham Parks & Rec Dept	42	Whatcom	\$ 500,000	\$ 1,215,914
Acq	Bay Street Ped Path--Mosquito Fleet Trail	Port Orchard City of	26	Kitsap	\$ 105,750	\$ 105,750
Dev	Naches Rail to Trail Final Phase (ONH to 40th Ave)	Yakima County Public Services	15	Yakima	\$ 810,700	\$ 810,700
Dev	Ferry County Rail Trail Ph 3	Ferry County of	7	Ferry	\$ 98,000	\$ 99,000
Dev	Foothills National Recreation Trail Final Phase	Pierce County Parks & Rec	31	Pierce	\$ 2,755,063	* \$ 2,755,063
Dev	Washougal Waterfront Trail	Camas-Washougal Port of	18	Clark	\$ 500,000	\$ 672,264
Dev	Point Defiance Loop Trail - TR	Tacoma MPD	27	Pierce	\$ 3,250,000	\$ 3,250,000
Dev	Appleway Trail Phase 2B Development	Spokane Valley City of	4	Spokane	\$ 813,000	\$ 813,000
Acq	Sound to Olympics North Kitsap Gap	Kitsap County Parks and Rec	23	Kitsap	\$ 740,500	\$ 949,500
Dev	Willapa Hills Trail--Deck Bridge 5	State Parks	20	Lewis	\$ 400,000	\$ 80,000
Dev	Olympic Discovery Trail, Discovery Bay, Phase 2	Jefferson County of	24	Jefferson	\$ 250,000	\$ 500,000
Dev	Woodland Creek Community Park Trail Connection	Lacey Parks & Rec Dept	22	Thurston	\$ 53,172	\$ 53,172
Dev	Harris Creek-Vosper Multi-use Trail	Chehalis Confederated Tribes	19	Grays Harbor	\$ 140,405	\$ 135,156
Dev	Whitehorse Trail Design Development	Snohomish County Parks Dept	39	Snohomish	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 5,198,000
Dev	Port Angeles Waterfront Trail 2014	Port Angeles City of	24	Clallam	\$ 500,000	\$ 1,692,232
Acq	Whitehorse Trail Trailhead Acq. Oso Mill	Snohomish County Parks Dept	39	Snohomish	\$ 233,250	\$ 233,250
Acq	Centennial Trail - Bryant Trailhead Acquisition	Snohomish County Parks Dept	10	Snohomish	\$ 96,757	\$ 96,758

In 2015 there was on project that requested \$2.7 million and one that requested \$3.25 million. If these had been limited to \$500 then 12 more projects would have been funded.

2017

2017-2019

Rank	Score	Project Number and Types*	Project Name	Grant Applicant	Grant Request	Applicant Match	Total
1	72.0833	16-1869D	Arboretum Waterfront Trail Redevelopment	Seattle	\$475,000	\$475,000	\$950,000
2	70.0417	16-1362D	Foothills Trail and Bridge Development	King County	\$2,800,000	\$7,325,000	\$10,125,000
3	68.125	16-1739D	Lake to Sound Trail Development	King County	\$500,000	\$1,691,586	\$2,191,586
4	67.875	16-1813D	Whitehorse Trail Development Phase 2	Snohomish County	\$1,090,000	\$1,096,000	\$2,186,000
5	67.4583	16-2027D	North Creek Regional Trail	Snohomish County	\$1,000,000	\$3,600,000	\$4,600,000
6	67.3333	16-1936D	Ferry County Rail Trail Phase 4	Ferry County	\$82,000	\$83,000	\$165,000
7	65.6667	16-1390D	Spruce Railroad Trail and Daley Rankin Tunnel Restoration	Clallam County	\$649,000	\$651,000	\$1,300,000
8	65.0417	16-1471D	South Gorge Trail	Spokane	\$1,100,000	\$1,175,500	\$2,275,500
9	63.4167	16-1649D	Smokiam Trail Development	Soap Lake	\$666,350	\$666,350	\$1,332,700
10	62.7917	16-1830C	Winthrop River Walk Trail Phase 2	Winthrop	\$308,500	\$308,500	\$617,000
11	60.9167	16-1414D	Park at Bothell Landing Trail Bridge Replacement	Bothell	\$965,000	\$1,325,000	\$2,290,000
12	60.8333	16-1383D	Grass Lake Nature Park Trail Development	Olympia	\$975,000	\$1,630,371	\$2,605,371
13	60.0417	16-1387D	Columbia River Trail in Washougal	Washougal	\$874,791	\$874,791	\$1,749,582
14	59.0833	16-1633D	Clover Island Riverwalk Northshore Trail	Port of Kennewick	\$430,000	\$768,253	\$1,198,253
15	57.7083	16-1773D	Lakeshore Drive Trail Development	Entiat	\$42,121	\$51,483	\$93,604
16	55.6667	16-1870D	Swan Creek Park Trails	Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma	\$2,250,000	\$2,970,323	\$5,220,323
17	54.75	16-1443D	Chelatchie Railroad Trail Phase 2	Clark County	\$454,147	\$454,147	\$908,294
18	54.4583	16-2019C	Jim Kaeminkg Senior Trail Development	Lynden	\$1,088,682	\$1,088,683	\$2,177,365
19	54.3333	16-1576D	River Front Trail Development: Huntington Avenue North Segment	Castle Rock	\$243,125	\$244,175	\$487,300
20	51.25	16-1818D	Skagit County Centennial Trail Development Phase 1	Skagit County	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$500,000
21	50.75	16-2005A	Roslyn to Teanaway Regional Trail System	Roslyn	\$356,737	\$356,738	\$713,475
22	48.8333	16-1737D	May Creek Trail Bridge Development	Newcastle	\$477,500	\$477,500	\$955,000
					\$17,077,953	\$27,563,400	\$44,641,353

*Project Types: A=Acquisition, C=Combination, D=Development

In 2017 there were 6 projects requesting more than \$1 million. If they had been limited to \$500,000 then all the trails projects would have been funded up to \$500,000 each. These are just the most recent results. RCO staff can provide the RCFB with a specific number of how many more trails projects would have been funded at different cap levels over the life of the WWRP.

The local parks category has a cap of \$1 million for acquisition and \$500,000 for development projects. Both the trails category and the local parks category receive the same percentage distribution from the total WWRP allocation. Yet many more local parks projects receive funding than trails category projects. And to my knowledge there has not been a request by the Washington Parks and Recreation Association to remove these caps. Since many of these agencies are the same ones requesting trails category funding one could assume they would not object on caps for the trails category. The only agencies likely to object to a cap are the rich ones that can afford a huge match and therefore submit very large project requests.

The WWRP was created and designed to provide funding for all agencies of many types throughout the entire state. The rich agencies do not necessarily even need the WWRP to fulfill their goals. Many of these rich agencies are supported by very large bond programs. The WWRP is seen as just one more source of funds. That is not the case for the majority of local agencies.

Conclusion

The existing policy of no limit on funding requests for the trails category restricts the number of potential funding recipients each biennium. There is no justification for NOT having a cap similar to the local parks category. I request that the RCFB request RCO staff to submit a proposal to rectify this weakness in the WWRP program and place a cap on the trails category.