

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION FUNDING BOARD SUMMARY MINUTES

Date: April 25, 2023

Place: Hybrid - Room 172, Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE; Olympia, WA and online via Zoom

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Members:

Ted Willhite, Chair	Seattle	Shiloh Burgess	Wenatchee
Trang Lam	Camas	Kristen Ohlson-Kiehn	Designee, Washington Department of Natural Resources
Michael Shiosaki	Seattle	Amy Windrope	Designee, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Vacant	Vacant	Peter Herzog	Designee, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

This summary is to be used with the materials provided in advance of the meeting. The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) retains a recording as the formal record of the meeting.

Call to Order:

Chair Willhite called the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) meeting to order at 9:00 AM and **Julia McNamara**, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Board Liaison, performed roll call, determining quorum.

Motion: Move to Approve the April 25, 2023, Agenda

Moved By: Member Shiosaki

Seconded by: Member Herzog

Decision: **Approved**

Item 1: Consent Agenda

Chair Willhite introduced the consent agenda, which included the January 24, 2023, meeting minutes, seventy-five time extensions, and recognized the years of service of volunteer community members Susan Patterson, Scott VanderWey, and Peter Guillozet. Chair Willhite gave permission for Ms. McNamara to use his signature on the meeting minutes.

Motion: Move to Approve Resolution 2023-06

Moved By: Member Ohlsen-Kiehn

Seconded by: Member Herzog

Decision: **Approved**

Item 2: Director's Report

Director's Report

Director Megan Duffy introduced Monica Atkins, the new Administrative Assistant for RCO's Recreation and Conservation Grants Section.

Director Duffy highlighted the No Child Left Inside (NCLI) grant round that received 174 applications and a requested record total of \$12.3 million. Three grants in the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) were approved by the National Park Service (NPS): \$2 million for the City of Lynwood's Scriber Lake Park Boardwalk Trail, \$1.4 million for the City of Spokane's Riverfront Park South Suspension Bridge, and \$1 million for the City of Seattle's Maple Wood Playfield.

Director Duffy also shared a new opportunity announced by NPS regarding the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) funds from the Department of Defense, intended to enhance outdoor access and protect at-risk land near military bases. There are \$40 million in REPI funds and \$40 million in unobligated LWCF funds that can match each other.

Legislative and Policy Update

Brock Milliern, Policy and Legislative Director, highlighted bills of interest to the board. House Bill (HB) 1086 increased the limit a local government can direct contract with a service organization from \$25,000 to \$75,000. HB 1258 addressed tourism marketing community matching funds and provided a one-to-one non-state, non-federal match, reducing local tourism related marketing costs. HB 1460 codified the Trust Land Transfer program into statute at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and provided funding for an initial list of projects. HB 1750 promotes water safety and education and will provide signs in places like bridges. Senate Bill (SB) 5145 amends the recreational immunity law providing recreational immunity around dams during high and low flows. SB 5257 established a thirty-minute minimum recess for elementary aged kids each day. HB 1170 was requested by the Department of Ecology (ECY) and updates the state's Climate Response Strategy. HB 1176 establishes a climate corps for service and workforce programs to support climate ready communities.

The Capital Budget included \$120 million for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP), funding approximately sixty-two percent of the WWRP projects. Most other RCO grant programs were funded at or close to the requested amounts. Mr.

Milliern noted the Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Account received slightly more than requested due to an error discovered in 2021, when more funds were going to DNR than statutorily required.

RCO's request for funding to maintain the State's recreation data was not approved in the Operating Budget; however, the rest of the Operating Budget requests were well funded. Mr. Milliern highlighted the Lead Entity and Salmon Recovery Regions request funded at \$3.4 million. The Deferred Maintenance Grant was a Washington Recreation and Parks Association (WRPA) request for funding maintenance that was deferred during the pandemic and was funded at \$5 million. RCO will be working with WRPA to develop a program to allocate these funds.

Member Ohlson-Kiehn asked if there was any feedback on the recreation data request and if that will be requested again in the future. Mr. Milliern explained that he did receive positive feedback and will consider asking again in the future.

Mr. Milliern detailed the Community Outdoor Athletic Facilities (COAF) funds. COAF began with \$43 million from remaining funds after paying off the bonds from Lumen Field. RCO staff have been working to develop a program to invest these funds into underserved communities for youth athletic facilities around the state. RCO requested expansion of applicant types and an adjustment to the administrative rate. However, the Senate budget diverted funds to regional athletic facilities and improvements to publicly owned minor league baseball stadiums. The final budget kept \$12.5 million in place for COAF for the 23-25 biennium and an additional \$12.5 million in the 25-27 biennium for this program. Relief was granted from the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) language that requires an equal split between new, renovation, and maintenance projects.

In closing, Mr. Milliern highlighted the \$7 million provided for NCLI and the \$3.9 million for the Outdoor Learning Grants program, both grant programs that provide outdoor opportunities for children.

Chair Willhite commended the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition's (WWRC) work advocating for WWRP funds.

General Public Comment

Public Comment was moved ahead of the break.

John White, resident of Burien, Washington provided comment concerning Eagle Landing Park's storm drain issue, which he believes has caused damage to the bluff, stairs, and bulkhead, which he reported to the City of Burien. The city closed the stairs to the beach in 2013 due to safety concerns surrounding the damage to the stairs. In 2017

Mr. White notified RCO that the city had closed the beach access. Mr. White provided materials that were distributed to the board and can be found in the [meeting materials](#) on page 215.

Daive Feinberg, resident of Burien, requested that RCO work with the City of Burien to preserve and reopen the Eagle Landing Park stairs.

Shelli Park, Crimson Park Design, shared that the Eagle Landing stairs hold significant community history and pride. The original designer and engineer of the stairs is ready to assess the structural stability of the remaining piers, and a reputable geoengineering company is ready to provide a slope stability assessment.

John Cannon, licensed lawyer and concerned citizen of Burien, advocated for John White's efforts to reopen the Eagle Landing stairs.

David Meinert, resident of Burien, shared that he lives in a diverse neighborhood within walking distance to Eagle Landing Park. With the stairs closed, there is no longer beach access within walking distance. He noted that the state and city spent a combined \$2 million on the stairs. Public access to the beach by way of boat is not feasible as there is no buoy or dock. **Director Duffy** clarified that the stairs were removed from the grant agreement when the grant agreement was amended in August of 2020 and are no longer a part of that agreement.

Chair Willhite noted that this is not a matter for a board resolution, but these comments have brought this matter of concern to the board's attention.

Member Shiosaki asked if the original grant was for acquisition or development and Director Duffy believed it was for both acquisition and development. Director Duffy also noted she will follow up with Mr. White personally.

BREAK: 10:00 AM - 10:10 AM

Additional public comment after the break:

Yvonne Kraus, Executive Director of the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance (Evergreen), expressed appreciation for the grant evaluation process that RCO performs, which creates empathy and understanding. Ms. Kraus shared that the NOVA process has been the most rewarding process that she has gone through at Evergreen. The diversity of the board's grant programs has created the baseline for the programs Evergreen implements. Evergreen has supported other grants from NOVA, RTP, and NCLI. Ms. Kraus expressed gratitude for the investments from the board that allow Evergreen to grow as an organization.

Chair Willhite and **Member Lam** credited Ms. Kraus and Evergreen for reaching out to different community groups and incorporating small communities.

Item 3: Grant Criteria Changes

Member Windrope returned from the break at 10:19 AM.

Leah Dobey and Ben Donatelle, Policy Specialists, provided an overview of the recreation evaluation criteria changes that will be explored during 2023 in response to recommendations from the 2022 Equity Review of RCO grant programs, the 2022 Physical Activity Task Force Report, and 2023 Washington State Recreation and Conservation Plan (SCORP).

Ms. Dobey discussed the community, health, environmental and workforce benefits of outdoor recreation in Washington, citing an RCO 2020 analysis. A 2020 Trust for Public Land (TPL) study called "The Heat is On", found that a national average of parks that served non-white populations were forty-five acres in size and five times more crowded compared to eighty-seven acres in white populations. TPL also discovered that when looking at income, parks that served low-income populations were a quarter of the size and four times more crowded than parks serving high-income populations.

Related to his work on SCORP, Mr. Donatelle noted that Washington's population is increasing, aging, becoming more diverse, and have health challenges.

Crowded recreation areas, limited access, and limited time for recreation are barriers to outdoor recreation. By 2050, Washington is expected to have two million more residents, with urban areas becoming more crowded while rural populations decrease. More opportunities and better neighborhood access will encourage outdoor recreation. These findings will help shape and define where to focus investments during these population changes.

Ms. Dobey discussed the findings from last year's equity review, performed by the Prevention Institute. Findings included low investment and minimal proposals in low-income areas and communities of color, and problematic subjective scoring criteria that relies on the individual values of evaluation committee members.

The equity review, SCORP, and past recommendations from the Physical Activity Task Force, along with feedback from staff, applicants, and advisory committees, all recommended updates and changes to grant criteria.

The focus of the proposed criteria changes effort will be categories in Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF), Aquatic Land Enhancement Account (ALEA), LWCF, WWRP Local Parks,

WWRP Water Access, and WWRP Trails. Changing criteria across multiple programs will help keep criteria more consistent for applicants who apply to multiple programs. Additional changes will be considered to align recreation programs with the 2023 SCORP priorities.

The categories of criteria that will be reviewed are:

- 1) Need – includes a wide variety of information including how projects meet SCORP priorities and demographic information from the Application Data Tool.
- 2) Need Satisfaction – looks different across programs and categories and asks if the project meets requirements in the Need question criteria.
- 3) Project Support – can expand to reward more engaged methods of support.
- 4) Immediacy of Threat – asks applicants to describe what will happen if the project is not addressed immediately.
- 5) Expansion and Renovation – tied to past SCORPs and can disadvantage communities that do not have existing park space and have a challenging time acquiring it.

Next steps include outreach to communities this spring via a workgroup and reporting findings to the board in June. Options for a decision will be presented at the October meeting and implemented for the March 2024 grant round, but only after seeking feedback from workgroups and public comment.

Member Lam asked if there was any impact to the use of outdoor spaces due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Donatelle referred to a National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) study that showed there were seven million more people recreating outdoors from 2019 to 2020.

Member Burgess shared her concerns of possibly eliminating candidates from being successful in the grant programs by making sweeping criteria changes. Member Burgess and **Member Windrope** discussed the importance of considering the local community and visitors who will benefit from the grant opportunities when thinking about changes to criteria.

Director Duffy noted that when potential applicants review criteria and do not think they will perform well given the criteria, they may not apply, which underscores the importance that criteria play in who applies for grants.

Item 4: Youth Athletic Facilities and Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Changes

Brock Milliern and Ben Donatelle provided an overview of reasons for policy changes to the Youth Athletic Facilities program and an assessment of the relationship between YAF and WWRP's Local Parks programs concerning matching funds.

Mr. Milliern noted that the cost of developing youth athletic facilities has increased significantly since grant limits were set in 2017, when limits increased from \$250,000 to \$350,000 and small projects were set at \$75,000. Anecdotal feedback from applicants indicates that new facilities now cost \$2-2.5 million. Challenges of the YAF program include:

- 1) Insufficient grant limits to achieve project outcomes.
- 2) Acquisition-only projects are ineligible, which may affect who is able to apply.
- 3) Low number of applications in the "small grants" category.
- 4) The high number of applications that match YAF and WWRP Local Parks projects together. WWRP Local Parks is one of the most overprescribed programs and shifting applications out of WWRP and into YAF could be beneficial.

Ben Donatelle highlighted a range of projects that show how YAF and WWRP Local Parks funds are used, including:

- Pierce County Park's Sprinker Recreation Center Phase One Outdoor Improvement ([20-1389](#)) that utilized WWRP Local Parks, YAF, and LWCF funds.
- City of Olympia's Yelm Highway Community Park ([20-1534](#)), which utilized WWRP Local Parks funds. YAF funds could not be used as this was an acquisition only project.
- City of Omak's Skate Park Redevelopment ([20-1412](#)), which utilized YAF Small Projects category.
- The Kalispel Tribe of Indian's Usk Basketball Courts ([20-1810](#)) will utilize YAF funds as they do not have a recreation plan, which are required for relevant WWRP funds.

Proportionately, YAF funds a larger percentage of projects than WWRP Local Parks when comparing requested funds to awarded funds in each program, demonstrating that YAF is an accessible funding source for communities with fewer resources. Projects can be successful when YAF is used as match funding for WWRP Local Parks projects, and more successful when a WWRP Local Parks project has an eligible YAF element.

Mr. Milliern and Mr. Donatelle will consider the following program and research questions:

- 1) What is the board's strategic target for each program?
- 2) How does the program contribute to the board's equity goals?
- 3) How does the program advance the new SCORP priorities?
- 4) Should there be different categories for projects with significant scope differences?
- 5) Should there be different high and low grant limits and categories for differently resourced communities?
- 6) How should athletics projects be incentivized to work through YAF?
- 7) Should the number of projects with athletics elements in WWRP Local Parks be reduced, and if so, how?
- 8) What are the current costs of developing an athletic facility?
- 9) How should escalating costs through the current program be accommodated?
- 10) What policy/grant limit/evaluation criteria changes would help to distinguish the YAF and WWRP Local Parks programs better?

Mr. Milliern and Mr. Donatelle will engage with stakeholders in May before presenting policy options and requesting board direction in June, followed by the request for a board decision in October.

Member Windrope asked why YAF does not require communities to have a recreation plan, and if that contributes to YAF's success in underfunded communities. Mr. Donatelle replied that not requiring a recreation plan lowers the barriers for communities to be successful in getting their projects funded. Member Windrope suggested a place holder criterion specific to underserved communities to give them the resources to complete a recreation plan. Mr. Milliern shared that the Planning for Recreation Access (PRA) grant program will help smaller communities develop recreation plans. **Member Shiosaki** asked if PRA applications were mostly for site specific projects or larger scale planning efforts. **Leah Dobey** answered that they were about 50/50. She added that twenty-one projects were funded with the original PRA \$3 million, and that up to another forty could be funded with the additional appropriation of \$5 million.

LUNCH: 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM – Quorum determined. Member Windrope returned at 12:31.

Item 5: Addressing Cost Increases Process Follow-up

Brock Milliern discussed the impact of significant cost increases for land, labor, materials, and equipment on board approved projects where budgets are set years before project implementation. Mr. Milliern shared the options discussed at the January meeting for addressing the cost increase policies for the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA):

- 1) Allow the director to approve cost increases up to ten percent of the total project – bringing ALEA in line with most other board programs (staff recommendation).
- 2) Do not allow cost increases – would require the board to approve cost increases.

There were three options chosen for further review for the WWRP Outdoor Recreation Account and Habitat Conservation Account discussed in January:

- 1) Allow the director to approve ten percent cost increases – this option was eliminated by the board at the January meeting.
- 2) Allow the director to approve ten percent cost increase, but with priority to partially funded projects, then cost increases, and then alternatives.
- 3) Hold back one to two and a half percent of funds to cover cost increases.
- 4) Do not allow cost increases – would require the board to approve cost increases.

Staff solicited comment and input from the public, WRPA and WWRP on the two policy changes. There were no comments regarding ALEA. WWRP's option two or a "modified" option two was supported; however, there was concern that if cost increases were allowed in the grant programs, it would become the default method to address increases (rather than seeking non-grant funding), adversely impacting projects further down on the list.

Mr. Milliern discussed the emergence of two new policy options under WWRP:

- 5) The director may use unspent funds from the State Parks category to approve cost increases for a State Parks category project. The increase is limited to ten percent of the total project amount for the approved WWRP State Parks category project.
- 6) The director may use unspent funds to approve cost increases up to ten percent of the total project amount for WWRP, if the consumer price index increase is five percent or higher for any six consecutive months starting May 2023. In addition, the director must prioritize the use of unspent funds in the following order: finish

funding partially funded projects, approve pending cost increases, and then fund alternatives on the board approved ranked lists.

Mr. Milliern noted that WWRP option three might impact project lists if two and a half percent of funding is withheld, primarily in the State Parks, Riparian, Farmland, Local Parks, Trails, and Habitat categories.

Chair Willhite asked if anyone was in favor of WWRP option three. No one was in favor, and it was eliminated as an option.

Mr. Milliern shared a new option for WWRP:

- 7) Allow option two, but only when the board declares specific circumstances that trigger this option.

This new option would require the director and the staff to bring the policy to the board to enact in exceptional circumstances (i.e., hard economic times) and would allow the board to decide if the circumstances would be considered exceptional.

Member Lam asked what baseline data would be used. Mr. Milliern answered that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is commonly used but because of the potential for unforeseen change, there could be different data available later. Member Lam asked how often staff have asked the board for cost increase approval in the past. Mr. Milliern noted that there have been between five and nine; however, because cost increases have not been allowed in these programs, there is currently no data to represent the need.

Members discussed choosing an option with equity in mind so that cost increases are not disproportionately provided to projects that are historically well funded and would know to ask for an increase. **Member Burgess** and **Member Windrope** noted that having a policy like option seven in place for future boards could act as a lifeline in times of crisis. **Member Herzog** is in favor of having an option that allows for flexibility. **Member Lam** noted that having language in the manual can help applicants know their options better.

Chair Willhite was in favor of making changes to ALEA to be more consistent with other programs and would like to keep the existing WWRP policy due to the unique nature of WWRP, noting current policy provides enough guidance to applicants.

Public Comment

Christine Mahler, WWRC Executive Director, thinks the new option seven is a compromise and addresses WWRC board's concerns regarding possible policy abuse.

She questioned if the current policy is equitable, and wondered, with the current policy, how applicants would know to come to the board with cost increases.

Member Herzog mentioned option five has been discussed internally at State Parks and found it is not needed and can be removed from consideration. He would like to see consistency throughout the whole program.

Chair Willhite suggested waiting to decide on the WWRP option until the next meeting to give time to hear feedback from stakeholders. He recommended deciding on ALEA.

Chair Willhite amended the resolution to exclude discussion and consideration for the WWRP option and approve option one for ALEA: *Allow the RCO director to use unspent funds to allow for cost increases up to ten percent of the total project costs. Increases above ten percent would be referred to the board for consideration.*

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-07** as amended.

Moved by: Member Herzog

Seconded by: Member Shiosaki

Approved: **Approved**

Item 6: Chelan County Wenatchee Riverfront Park Conversion Decision

Myra Barker, Compliance Unit Manager, presented the conversion proposal of the Chelan County Wenatchee Riverfront Park. The county is asking the board to recommend approval of the conversion and replacement to the NPS. The board's responsibility is to:

- 1) Evaluate practical alternatives for the conversion and replacement (including avoidance).
- 2) Ensure the replacement property meets the requirements of the funding (LWCF program and state bonds).
- 3) Provide a recommendation to the NPS for a LWCF conversion.
- 4) Approve or deny the request for state-funded conversions.

To comply with the administrative rule, board, and NPS policy, it is the sponsor's responsibility to:

- 1) Consider and evaluate all practical alternatives to the conversion and for the replacement.
- 2) Provide the public an opportunity to participate in the alternatives analysis, including a minimum 30-day public comment period.

- 3) Provide replacement property that is eligible in the respective grant program, is of at least equal market value, is equivalent or greater usefulness and location, is administered by the same project sponsor, and satisfies an identified need in the project sponsor's adopted plan.

Specific to a LWCF conversion, the replacement must fill a need within SCORP and comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

From 1968-1971, the board awarded \$96,000 in grants to develop camping facilities at the park, with a total project cost of \$413,071. Due to LWCF funds, the entire park is encumbered with the LWCF boundary. The park offers RV and tent camping, restrooms with showers, and access to the Wenatchee River.

In 2001, Chelan County entered a contract with the State Department of Commerce (SDC) to operate a seasonal farmworker housing area in an undeveloped grassy area. Originally the housing was temporary canvas tents, but they have been converted to more permanent housing with a restroom, outdoor kitchen, play area, and soccer field to support residents.

The conversion area is eight-point-six (8.6) acres and includes an open grass undeveloped area, pull-through RV sites, overflow parking area, and is valued at \$430,000. The proposed replacement is the adjacent 20 acres, currently owned by Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT). The property includes riparian forested area, wetlands, open space, will expand access to the Wenatchee River, and is valued at \$529,000. If approved, the conversion area will be removed from the grant boundary and the replacement area will be added.

There were no comments received during the public comment period. The county has completed all necessary steps and documentation and RCO is waiting for NPS to advise in the compliance process of the NHPA, which is the NPS's responsibility.

Public Comment

None.

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-08**

Moved by: Member Burgess

Seconded by: Member Shiosaki

Approved: *Approved*

Chair Willhite noted for the record a clerical error in Resolution 2023-07: *undo* should be *undue*.

Item 7: Additions to Exceptions to Conversion Policy Proposal

Myra Barker presented the proposed changes to the Exceptions to Conversion policy that was adopted in 2019 and was created in response to sponsors asking RCO for flexibility on changes to sites. The purpose of the policy is to address changes that have minimal impact on the intended purpose and use of the project area. The identified exceptions would create the need for a conversion without this policy. Each request is considered on a case-by-case basis; the action or use must be secondary to the site's intended purpose and use; a sponsor must provide sufficient documentation that the use or action has minimal impact and may improve or benefit the project. There are no automatic approvals granted for an exception.

Staff recommends the following changes:

- 1) Revise the Exception for Relocating an Easement: relocation of an easement *and related infrastructure* that would benefit and/or improve the intended purpose and use of the project area, with restoring the disturbed area to original or better condition in a specified period.
- 2) Add as an exception: A new easement and/or right-of-way and related infrastructure (such as utility box, poles, guide wires) that would benefit the intended purpose and use of the project area. *Not intended to provide a blanket exception to any new easement such as conveying an easement to a private party for their convenience.*
- 3) Add as an Exception: A new easement and/or right-of-way for a culvert replacement or improving fish passage that has minimal impact to the intended purpose and use of the project area.
- 4) Add as an Exception: Changes to an existing easement, right-of-way, or encumbrance (and related infrastructure) that would have minimal impact to the intended purpose and use of the project area.
- 5) Add as an Exception: Telecommunications and related infrastructure (such as tower, fencing, equipment, access and related lease or easement) that has minimal impact to the intended purpose and use of the project area and provides for increased safety, or service, or information to the public using the project area.

Current policy allows for limited telecommunication infrastructure on WWRP Local Parks sites only; adding this exception would apply to all grant programs. NPS modified their policy to allow for cell towers when it provides increased public safety; however, this policy does not allow for easements or access to towers.

Members discussed these exceptions, focusing largely on exception five.

Member Windrope noted that number four is a broad exception without defining what “minimal” means in this context. Ms. Barker said that not providing a narrow definition allows for flexibility and requires the sponsor to justify their request for an exception.

Member Trang asked how often applicants ask for telecommunication easements in their project. Ms. Barker said that sponsors often do not self-report and that a conversion is needed when telecommunication equipment is discovered.

Member Shiosaki suggested that the board provide reasons for local agencies to be able to say no to telecommunication facilities, noting the visual impact of these facilities in natural spaces and shared his concern over the potential to overuse in natural spaces.

Chair Willhite and **Member Windrope** agreed, sharing the same concerns.

Member Burgess would like to revisit this exception later with more information and discuss language for the possibility of telecommunication facilities under certain circumstances to minimize the need for conversions.

Member Herzog is concerned about safety in remote areas but does think applicants should come to the board with a request in those instances. He would like to consider making it clear that an exception is possible and clarifying it in the manual.

Director Duffy noted that this exception is modeled after NPS for equity purposes. Ms. Barker suggested continuing to use the language around telecommunications found in Manual 7.

Chair Willhite would like to amend the resolution to remove the fifth exception on telecommunication to read: *Be it resolved that the board approves the resolution 2023-09 and the policy recommendations contained in this memo except for the policy recommendation for telecommunications and related infrastructure.*

Public Comment

Written public comments can be found in the memorandum on this item.

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-09** as amended

Moved by: Member Shiosaki

Seconded by: Member Lam

Approved: **Approved**

Member Ohlson-Kiehn was absent from the meeting from 1:50 PM to 3:06 PM for a meeting within her agency.

Item 8: Scope Change: City of Zillah, Zillah Splash Park 20-1305

Jesse Sims, Outdoor Grant Manager, presented the request from the City of Zillah to move the construction of the proposed splash pad from Loges Park to Stewart Park.

The City of Zillah applied for a LWCF grant to design and install a splash park at Loges Park. Loges Park was originally chosen as the location for this splash pad because it was believed that utilizing the existing footprint of a decommissioned pool would be less costly. The City of Zillah applied for funding in 2020, which was approved in 2021.

Since approval, the City of Zillah has determined that the cost to renovate the old pool into a splash pad, along with the requirement to bury existing overhead powerlines would go significantly over their allotted budget. Stewart Park was originally not considered due to limited parking; however, parking was expanded in late 2020, after the city had applied for the LWCF grant.

Stewart Park is in the hub of the city and can be accessed by the main street in town. The newly built parking area, the existing civic center, and historic Teapot Gas Station are all owned by the city and are adjacent to Stewart Park. By moving the splash park to this site, the city estimates a savings of approximately \$150,000 and more community members will be served in a central location.

Staff recommend approval of the site change, allowing the City of Zillah to build the new splash pad at Stewart Park.

Public Comment

None.

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-10**

Moved by: Member Burgess

Seconded by: Member Lam

Approved: **Approved**

Item 9: Boating Facilities Program: Approval of Preliminary Ranked Lists

Allison Dellwo, Outdoor Grant Manager, provided the preliminary ranked list for the Boating Facilities Program (BFP) for board approval. Information about the BFP can be found at rco.wa.gov/grant/boating-facilities-program/.

RCO received fourteen Local Agency applications, which included twelve development or renovation projects and two planning projects. Applicants requested a combined \$7,919,575.

The number one ranked local project is the Stan Sayres Boat Launch Renovation by the City of Seattle Parks and Recreation (RCO #[22-2051](#)). The City of Seattle will use BFP funds to replace four launch lanes and extend two fixed piers with boarding floats, improving public access and safety.

There were thirteen State Agency applications, which included eleven development or renovation projects, one planning project, and one combination acquisition and planning project. Applicants in this category requested a combined \$12,532,092.

The number one ranked state agency project is the Region Six Access Restroom Replacement sponsored by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) (RCO #[22-2182](#)). This project will remove four restrooms that are in disrepair and replace them with a modern and accessible restroom option for motorized boaters to utilize, including accessible routes to and from parking, at four sites in Pierce County.

Staff recommended the approval of Resolution 2023-11, including Tables 1 and 2: Boating Facilities Program, Preliminary Ranked List of Local and State Agency Projects, 2023-25.

Public Comment

Written public comment details can be found in the memorandum on this item.

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-11**
Moved by: Member Herzog
Seconded by: Member Windrope
Approved: **Approved**

Item 10: Firearms and Archery Range Recreation: Approval of Preliminary Ranked List

Ashly Arambul, Outdoor Grant Manager, briefly described the Firearms and Archery Range Recreation (FARR) Program (which can be found in more detail at rco.wa.gov/firearms-and-archery-recreation-program/) and requested board approval of the preliminary ranked list of projects.

RCO received six applications for development, which included three nonprofit clubs, one local agency (county), and two state agency (WDFW) projects. Applicants requested a combined \$604,800.

The number one ranked project is the Evergreen Sportsmen's Club Rifle-Pistol Range Safety Improvements (RCO #[22-2179](#)) project. Located in Littlerock, the club

encompasses 297 acres for sport shooting, and the grant project is located at the rifle and pistol range. The club will improve storm water drainage, relocate the safety berm, install “no blue sky” baffles to contain projectiles, and renovate the ADA firing line. Additionally, the club will pave the parking area, install a new CXT restroom, and renovate the range safety officer building. This project will improve a fifty-year-old facility and enhance public and volunteer safety, as well as ensure open operations for the public during the rainy season.

Staff recommended approval of Resolution 2023-12, including Table 1: Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Preliminary Ranked List of Projects, 2023-25.

General Public Comment

None.

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-12**
Moved by: Member Shiosaki
Seconded by: Member Herzog
Approved: **Approved**

BREAK: 2:15 - 2:36

Item 11: Recreational Trails Program: Approval of Preliminary Ranked Lists for the 2023-25 Biennium

This item was presented after Item 12 to allow public commenters to arrive.

Hayley Edmonston, Outdoor Grant Manager, asked the board to approve the preliminary ranked list of forty-three projects for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) for the 2023-25 biennium, briefly explaining the RTP program which can be found in more detail at rco.wa.gov/grant/recreational-trails/program/. There were seven proposals in the education category and thirty-six in the general category which includes development and maintenance projects.

Member Ohlson-Kien returned at 3:06.

The top ranked project in the Education category is the United States Forest Service (USFS), Naches Ranger District, Wilderness Education Rangers (RCO #22-2285). The grant will fund four seasonal education rangers and up to four part-time volunteers to patrol high-use areas within the wilderness and backcountry. The rangers will provide education to promote wilderness and Leave-No-Trace principles, resource protection, and visitor safety.

In the General category the top ranked project is the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, Eastern Washington Volunteer Trail Maintenance (RCO #22-2195) project. These funds will support volunteer trail maintenance at recreation sites throughout Eastern Washington. The goal is to assist land managers with nearly nine-thousand hours of volunteer labor to maintain over 200 miles of non-motorized trails and over 120 miles of motorized trails that are of critical importance to mountain bikers, hikers, equestrians, and motorized recreation enthusiasts.

Staff recommends approving the ranked lists in Tables 1 and 2 of Resolution 2023-13.

General Public Comment

Holly Sato, resident of Falls City, Washington, and avid outdoors enthusiast, spoke on behalf of herself, family, and nine additional neighbors who gave their permission to be represented by Ms. Sato. She expressed gratitude for being able to access mountain bike trails in and around King County. Ms. Sato encouraged the board to approve the final ranked lists to ensure the public has access to healthy outdoor activities and recreation. She provided support for the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance as well.

Yvonne Kraus, Executive Director of the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance (Evergreen), shared how the RTP program supports Evergreen and its efforts on both the east and west side of the state. Evergreen represents over nine thousand members, eight regional chapters and delivers over 30 thousand volunteer hours a year. She expressed the difficulty of engaging and diversifying their volunteers noting the importance of scoring high in the RTP. Evergreen has faced criticism from other trail users in the nonmotorized community, often under the veil of environmentalism. Ranking number one shows other communities that Evergreen does a lot of work to ensure trails can continue to be used by everyone. In a comment on equity, Ms. Kraus shared that they work hard to engage women in volunteer trail crews, and there is now a 100 percent women-built trail near Raging River. Evergreen also offers mother and child, Spanish speaking-only classes on RTP sites, and is working on tribal collaborations. Ms. Kraus encouraged the board to approve the ranked lists.

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-13**

Moved by: Member Burgess

Seconded by: Member Lam

Approved: *Approved*

Item 12: Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities Program: Approval of Preliminary Ranked Lists for the 2023-25 Biennium

This item was presented ahead of Item 11 to allow public commenters to arrive.

Marguerite Austin, Section Manager, discussed the ranked project list for the Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Program before asking for board approval of the preliminary ranked lists. Ms. Austin explained the NOVA program and policies, which can be found in more detail at rco.wa.gov/grant/nonhighway-and-off-road-vehivle-activities-program-trails/. The NOVA program includes four categories: Education and Enforcement, Off-Road Vehicles (ORV), Nonhighway Road, and Nonmotorized.

Member Windrope returned from break at 2:39.

RCO received ninety-six applications for NOVA projects across all four categories, which included twenty-five Education and Enforcement, twenty Nonhighway Road, twenty-five Nonmotorized, and twenty-six Off-road Vehicle. Applicants requested a total of \$16,198,223. Ms. Austin noted that in the 2022 grant round, over half of the proposals were submitted by federal agencies, with fifty-four from the USFS, which made up 56.25 percent of all applications.

Dan Haws, Outdoor Grants Manager, shared that there were twenty-five proposed projects in the Education and Enforcing category, requesting a total of \$4,282,544. The USFS Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Snoqualmie Ranger District, (RCO #22-2233) Front Country Patrol is the number one ranked project in the Education and Enforcement category. The district's proximity to the Seattle metropolitan area makes it a high-use recreation area for activities such as camping, hiking, horseback riding, off-road vehicle riding, recreational target shooting, and hunting. It is estimated that there are over one million visitors per year within the ranger district. To help keep all users safe and to minimize impacts to the environment, a strong education and enforcement presence is a critical need. This project will fund ten seasonal front country rangers who will patrol and coordinate with volunteers in high-use areas within the Snoqualmie Ranger District. The team expects to conduct over 25,000 user contacts through this program.

In the Off-Road Vehicle category, RCO received twenty-six project proposals, totaling \$5,419,391. The number one ranked project is the DNR's Tahuya and Green Mountain Trails and Facilities Maintenance (RCO #22-2019) project, located in Kitsap and Mason Counties, east of the Hood Canal. The DNR will use this grant to maintain mixed-use ORV trails, bridges, campgrounds, trailheads, vault toilets, and seasonal day-use sites

within the Tahuya and Green Mountain State Forests. The grant will also help fund a trail specialist, a trail technician, and an equipment operator. The trails and facilities maintained by the grant are open year-round to a variety of NOVA recreationists. Additionally, NOVA users coming to the region bring an estimated \$4.6 million of tourism revenue to the area, providing a substantial economic benefit to the rural communities surrounding the forests.

Ms. Austin explained the Nonhighway Road category, of which there were twenty-five projects proposed, totaling \$2,597,710 in requested funds. The number-one ranked project in this category is the USFS Okanogan–Wenatchee National Forest, Wenatchee River Ranger District, Developed and Dispersed Recreation (RCO #22-2037) project, which will allow the district to maintain front country facilities that are utilized by over one million NOVA visitors annually. Staff will use these funds to maintain trailheads, repair facilities, mitigate hazards, repair vandalism, and clean developed and dispersed sites that may otherwise be overwhelmed.

In the Nonmotorized category, there were twenty-five proposed projects, totaling \$3,898,578 in requested funds. Fourteen of these projects are for maintenance, eight are for development, and three are for planning. The number one ranked project in this category is the USFS Okanogan–Wenatchee National Forest, Wenatchee River Ranger District, Wilderness and Multi-Use Trail Maintenance (RCO #22-2139) project, which covers three popular designated wilderness areas, including the Enchantments. These areas are off-limits to motorized devices, necessitating difficult manual labor be completed using human power and pack-animals.

Staff recommends approval of Resolution 2023-14, which includes ranked lists found in Tables 1-4.

General Public Comment

Written public comment details can be found in the memorandum on this item.

Motion: Move to Approve Resolution 2023-14

Moved by: Member Lam

Seconded by: Member Burgess

Approved: Approved

Chair Willhite asked when applicants will be notified that their projects are approved, and if staff provides an opportunity to speak with grant managers to discuss why their projects ranked lower than others. Ms. Austin explained that they will be notified soon, and in order of their position on the ranked list and that yes, there is an automated

notice that includes the opportunity to contact RCO staff to clarify how they can improve their application for the next grant round.

Item 13: State Agency Partner Reports

Governor's Office

Jon Snyder, Policy Specialist, shared handouts with board members that included the highlights of what was passed by legislature on budget and policy for outdoor recreation. He noted the passing of HB 1144 concerning recycling of electric vehicles and bike batteries, support for WWRP through the twenty percent funding increase, the state's commitment to outdoor education, and Washington's lead in outdoor recreation in comparison to other states.

Department of Natural Resources

Member Kristen Ohlson-Kiehn shared that conversation will be initiated by the heads of the three land management agencies (WDFW, DNR, and Washington State Department of Ecology) with the tribal chairs to address recreation impacts on state lands. Additionally, DNR will follow up with a tribal summit on June 12 and 13.

DNR has launched their Outdoor Access and Responsible Recreation statewide planning process. Member Ohlson-Kiehn shared appreciation for the Governor's Office, House and Senate, and excitement for the \$120 million approved for WWRP.

Member Ohlson-Kiehn shared DNR's budget successes, which included Safe and Sustainable Recreation funding; Natural Areas and Facilities Preservation and Access, for conservation funding; Community Forests, which was partially funded; and Trust Land Transfers, which was codified in this recent session. Using RCO as a model, DNR developed a process to rank potential properties to be transferred out of trust land status. Member Ohlson-Kiehn shared that the success for the Trust Land Transfers was due to the partners DNR worked with such as other state agencies, beneficiaries of state trust lands, and environmental advocates who partnered to develop the program and advocate for funding.

Operating requests received some funding for Protect Public Lands and Tribal Rights, which provides more enforcement officers and the Tribal First Foods program. The Conservation Corps did not receive as much funding as DNR had hoped, but they did receive full funding for their conservation asks which including scientifically based conservation decision package to identify conservation areas using the Washington Natural Heritage data, as well as the Natural Resource Conservation Area account funding. Finally, NOVA was funded. Overall, DNR is pleased with the budget outcomes.

Chair Willhite asked John Snyder to comment on the [Confluence of States](#). Mr. Snyder described the Confluence of States, which started with just three states (Washington, Utah, and Colorado) in 2016, and has expanded to include nearly 20 states. This is a bipartisan program that includes states that understand the outdoor economy is important, and that recreation and conservation are linked. There was a recent meeting in Washington, D.C. with the Outdoor Industry Association.

State Parks and Recreation Commission

Member Peter Herzog shared that State Parks total operating budget is \$255 million. About sixty-eight to sixty-nine percent of their budget is self-generating through donations, park fees, etc. Member Herzog noted that donations alone account for \$12-14 million in the State Parks budget. Some of the key programs supported in the legislative budget were around recreation lands maintenance; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in parks; Emerging Leaders Program; and support for capital budget to help in planning and outreach with tribal partners so that projects can be fully vetted and completed. Other projects include the Cultural Resources Management Masterplan for Motor Peninsula property near Sequim, climate change adaptation work, NCLI, and funding for recreation and impacts analysis.

State Parks received the largest capital budget ever, at \$84 million, and \$74 million in new appropriations money, which included grouping projects into different pools. There was a \$24 million pool for large projects and a \$20 million pool for small projects. State Parks is allowed to move money between projects for optimal use of funds. There was \$24 million for Nisqually State Park, the newest state park. The Glen Tana Property acquisition in Eastern Washington connects the Little Spokane Natural Area to public and tribal properties and will expand Spokane State Park.

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Member Amy Windrope shared that WDFW is looking forward to implementing the increased budget provided by the legislature. Their highest priority was their Biodiversity Package, which implements WDFW's State Wildlife Action Plan, receiving \$23 million to improve biodiversity in the state. There were investments for their Sustainability Plan, which included funds for electric vehicle charging stations and other actions to reduce WDFW's climate footprint over the next decade. WDFW received around \$5 million to reduce climate impacts for wildlife, which will include modeling to look at which species will be most impacted by climate change and what can be done to protect them. Significant money is going towards increasing the production of salmon in hatcheries, especially tribal hatcheries.

Member Windrope also noted increased protection of Southern Resident Killer whales from noise and disturbance with a bill to increase vessels distance from orcas to one thousand yards, and an investment of \$4M for toxics monitoring and analysis impacting salmon.

The Duckabush, which is a large restoration project, received capital funding, which will move the project forward in partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers.

Member Windrope ended by mentioning \$600,000 in funding to replace toilets statewide.

ADJOURN: 3:45 PM

The next regular meeting will be June 27-28. One day of this meeting will be set aside for a board retreat. The agenda is currently under development. The annual travel meeting is set for October 24-25. The location will be discussed with the board in June.

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Willhite", with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Ted Willhite