

## RECREATION AND CONSERVATION FUNDING BOARD SUMMARY MINUTES

**Date:** June 27, 2023

**Place:** Retreat – Room 172, Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE; Olympia, WA

### Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Members:

---

<b>Ted Willhite, Chair</b>	Seattle	<b>Shiloh Burgess</b>	Wenatchee
<b>Trang Lam</b>	Camas	<b>Kristen Ohlson-Kiehn</b>	Designee, Department of Natural Resources
<b>Michael Shiosaki</b>	Seattle	<b>Amy Windrope</b>	Designee, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
<b>Kitty Craig</b>	Seattle	<b>Peter Herzog</b>	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**, Board Liaison, performed roll call, determining quorum. **Member Windrope** was absent at the time of roll call and joined the meeting at 9:02.

**Motion:** Move to Approve the **June 27-28, 2023**, Agenda

**Moved By:** Member **Shiosaki**

**Seconded by:** Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**

**Decision:** **Approved**

**Chair Willhite** introduced new member, **Kitty Craig** before inviting members to introduce themselves and share a little about themselves.

### Item 1: Carbon and Climate with Department of Ecology

**Ben Donatelle**, Policy Specialist, briefly reviewed board policies and initiatives regarding climate change from 2014 to present including:

- House Bill (HB) 1181: Improving the state’s response to climate change by updating the state’s planning framework.
- HB 1176: Developing opportunities for service and workforce programs to support climate-ready communities.
- HB 1578: Improving community preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience to wildland fire health and safety impacts in areas of increasing population density, including in the wildland urban interface.
- Senate Bill (SB) 5688: Providing carbon and ecosystem services in the management of public lands.

**Adam Eitmann**, Director of Governmental Relations at Department of Ecology, briefed the board on recently passed climate bills including the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) (SB 5126), Clean Fuel Standards (HB 1091), Clean Energy Siting (HB 1216), Alternative Jet Fuel (SB 5447), and 2023 introduced bills: Public Lands and Carbon Sequestration (SB 5688), and Ecosystem Service (HB 1789). Additionally, Mr. Eitmann detailed the CCA auction, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Riparian Grant Program and provided an update on the State’s Climate Resilience Plan and other Ecology projects, including the Walla Walla Water 2050 Strategic Plan and the Drought Preparedness and Response bill.

Following these briefings, **Chair Willhite** asked if the Columbia Aquifer is accounted for in the Walla Walla Water 2050 plan, noting that the aquifer extends into Oregon. Mr. Eitmann shared that the Columbia Aquifer is accounted for, and the plan aims to ensure that investments made in Washington receive returns in Washington.

Members of the board received clarification on SB 5688, which would allow the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to earn revenue directly from ecosystem service, such as carbon sequestration contracts. The board can expect more conversations about this in the future from additional agencies. Notably, SB 5688 will address the protective changes that carbon sequestration would provide in an area where carbon production is occurring. Members discussed CCA funding structure and potential opportunities. **Member Shiosaki** asked if the economic value is in the land or in the forests, noting the eighty-year cycle of tree harvest, and **Member Ohlson-Kiehn** shared that the value is in the carbon sequestration itself.

**Member Windrope** asked about HB 1216, Clean Energy Siting and whether sites for clean energy would be on pre-existing sites, noting the large contribution from eastern Washington from windmills and hydro-electric dams, and the importance of keeping climate, habitat, and species protection in mind when thinking about clean energy. Mr. Eitmann answered that this is a broad scale bill that focuses on environmental impact

statements, adding that the redevelopment of previous sites can pose challenges when an original site was built without the support of the community. Member Windrope shared that Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is looking at placing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at hatcheries and other existing locations.

**BREAK: 10:25 AM - 10:35 AM**

## **Item 2: 23-25 Agency Policy Work Plan**

**Brock Milliern**, Policy and Legislative Director, began by sharing some of the board-related accomplishments and highlighted the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding increase, equity review, and the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Staff are implementing the equity review and SCORP, updating the Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF) program, and criteria changes across several programs. New policy efforts include developing a Local Parks Maintenance (LPM) program, assessing appraisal waivers, multi-site eligibility, and Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) review for equity. For the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), there is the creation of an Estuary Shoreline Restoration Program (WSRP) grant manual, riparian funding, and match reform. Additionally, there is a backlog of around seventy policy tweaks.

Members of the board discussed one-time programs, like LPM, and the workload associated with developing a one-time policy. **Member Herzog** suggested creating a one-time use policy template like the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (Parks).

Mr. Milliern would like to provide a policy workplan update more regularly.

Regarding the WWRP review, **Chair Willhite** recommended bringing any statutory changes for review and approval before the board. **Member Shiosaki** sought prioritization of the WWRP and equity reviews.

Prompted by a question from **Member Windrope**, **Director Duffy** shared the new RCO budget RCO will add five positions, two grant managers, a diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) coordinator, a tribal liaison, and a riparian coordinator to the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (GSRO). Director Duffy noted additional pressure on fiscal and IT and shared that RCO is in the process of an organizational structure review that has been ongoing over the past year.

**Member Lam** suggested adding equity review work to topics brought to the board, noting this may help smaller communities understand the work being done.

**Member Burgess** left at 11:27 a.m.

Members discussed ways to improve cooperation between agencies and organizations, particularly regarding riparian systems. **Director Duffy** noted that there is cooperation between agencies like the State Conservation Commission (SCC) through the SRFB, adding that RCO is at capacity when it comes to additional workload. **Member Ohlson-Kiehn** suggested partnering with universities to help expand cooperation.

**Member Ohlson Kiehn** asked about technology and the legislative response to the request for trail data. Mr. Milliern believes RCO should house a trail database once funded by the Legislature. Noting over-crowding in parks, **Chair Willhite** suggested using cell phone data along with a trail data for real-time monitoring; however, Mr. Milliern pointed out that cell phone data tends to be after-the-fact and is less helpful in real-time than anticipated.

#### **LUNCH: 11:42 AM - 12:45 PM**

**Member Burgess** returned during the lunch break.

#### **Item 3: Recreation Overview with Department of Natural Resources, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and State Parks**

**Member Herzog** and **Cynthia Wilkerson** provided an overview of the DNR, WDFW, and Parks joint committee working on reporting stewardship needs and managing impacts on state lands. One-time funding of \$1.9 million was provided by the operating budget for an ecological assessment, and the America the Beautiful Grant will pay for some facilitation. Agencies are taking steps to establish a communication structure and scope the overall effort.

**Member Ohlson-Kiehn** shared the tribes' growing concerns about the impacts of recreation and noted the importance of bringing the board into the conversation to better respond to tribal concerns, which include the expansion of recreation access and recreation interfering with treaty rights and maintaining ecological integrity.

**Member Lam** asked if landowners adjacent to state lands have been brought into the conversation. Ms. Wilkerson answered that they started with pilot projects to develop shareable methods on a larger scale. These pilots are in the convening and building trust phase. Member Herzog noted that adjacent utility lands will likely share responsibility but need specificity with areas of concern.

Following interactions with tribes, **Member Windrope** wondered about next steps. Ms. Wilkerson shared that it has been a challenge moving to the next step and recognized that these conversations cannot stop with the tribes. Ms. Wilkerson shared that the concept is to work with tribes to identify and examine areas of concern. The goal is to develop a tool through this process to measure impact on resources.

**Chair Willhite** commented that “partnership” may not be the right word to use when working with tribes as they are separate nations. Separately, he noted this emphasizes the need for more urban recreational opportunities to provide easier access to more populated areas, while limiting the impact on areas experiencing overuse. Lastly, Chair Willhite considered that tribes may be more in agreement on critical habitat and forestry. **Member Ohlson-Kiehn** expressed that they are not yet to the point of having the dialogue to decide if habitat should be the focus.

**Member Burgess** shared that in Wenatchee collaboration between the city, local tribes, museums, and community events has helped to share the importance of recreation areas, while highlighting societal advances and their impacts on the land and resources.

**Member Ohlson-Kiehn** noted that DNR will launch their recreational plan at the Tribal Summit and ask the tribes how they want to interact with DNR. DNR would like tribes and stakeholders/partners to work parallel with each other.

**Ms. Wilkerson** considered where to direct recreational use and whether concentration in a few locations is better or worse than dispersed low-impact areas. **Member Herzog** noted that there is a need for more intensive management.

The board shared their appreciation for this collective approach. In a final note, **Member Craig** suggested adding federal agencies to the conversation.

#### **Item 4: Equity Efforts**

**Director Megan Duffy** provided an overview of the equity efforts made by RCO. These efforts are informed by internal and external guidance from agency operations and programs. Director Duffy highlighted the board’s strategic plan’s pertinent guiding principles, objectives and strategies, and key performance measures, noting the board adopted diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statement.

RCO is addressing the recommendations made by the Prevention Institute and internal assessment review. Director Duffy noted that the technical assistance recommendations may take some time, but RCO is looking at what can be done with existing resources.

**Member Shiosaki** asked about establishing performance measures related to hiring and recruitment. Director Duffy shared that there are not targets in mind right now, and RCO uses state human resources.

**Member Lam** asked about retention of people of color (POC) and working with the office of equity. Director Duffy answered that this is a piece of implementing the recommendations.

**Chair Willhite** asked whether the recommendations have been incorporated into SCORP. Director Duffy answered that conceptually they are. Chair Willhite suggested requiring a DEI training module for new members.

**BREAK: 2:20 PM – 2:36 PM**

### **Item 5: Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Implementation**

**Ben Donatelle** distributed copies of [SCORP](#) to board members and discussed the unified strategy and plan implementation. SCORP is updated every five years with funding from LWCF. Mr. Donatelle shared the diverse efforts that went into creating SCORP, explained the 2022 Survey of Resident Demand, the Outdoor Recreation Experience Survey, the Survey of Recreation Providers, and updates to the Recreation Access Inventory.

Priorities for the SCORP 2023 Action Plan can be found on pages 68 and 69 of the [publication](#). Mr. Donatelle shared the seven implementation strategies that can be found in more detail on pages 70-74, along with an implementation schedule for each strategy. Mr. Donatelle noted that what was learned from SCORP will inform improving and expanding community engagement.

Next steps include grant criteria updates, policy development, maintaining and updating data, and supporting emerging programs.

### **Item 6: Closing Remarks**

**Chair Ted Willhite** noted being ahead of schedule and decided to recess early. The board was to reconvene at 9:00 am on June 28, 2023, for the business part of the meeting.

**RECESS: 3:16 PM**

## RECREATION AND CONSERVATION FUNDING BOARD SUMMARY MINUTES

**Date:** June 28, 2023

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

### Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Members:

---

<b>Ted Willhite, Chair</b>	Seattle	<b>Shiloh Burgess</b>	Wenatchee
<b>Trang Lam</b>	Camas	<b>Kristen Ohlson-Kiehn</b>	Designee, Department of Natural Resources
<b>Michael Shiosaki</b>	Seattle	<b>Amy Windrope</b>	Designee, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
<b>Kitty Craig</b>	Seattle	<b>Peter Herzog</b>	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 back to order at 9:00 AM and **Julia McNamara**, Board Liaison, performed roll call, determining quorum. **Member Ohlson-Kiehn** was excused for the beginning of the meeting and was expected to join later. **Member Windrope** was absent at the time of roll call.

### Item 7: Consent Agenda

**Member Windrope** arrived at 9:03 a.m.

Chair Willhite summarized the board retreat held the day before.

**Member Ohlson-Kiehn** arrived at 9:08 a.m.

**Chair Willhite** made note that the consent agenda includes the April 25, 2023, meeting minutes, time extensions for seven projects, and two cost increases.

**Motion:** Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-15**

**Moved By:** Member **Herzog**

**Seconded by:** Member **Lam**

**Decision:**      **Approved**

## **Item 8: Director's Report**

### **Director's Report**

**Director Megan Duffy**, RCO Director, highlighted non-board programs that were funded through the recent legislative session including the Planning for Recreation Access (PRA) Program. The Legislature approved an additional \$4.7 million for this program. Combined with the original funding, RCO has funded fifty-four of the ninety-nine applications. The Community Forest Program (CFP) received \$7.5 million, which would preserve 2,897 acres of forests. The No Child Left Inside (NCLI) Program was awarded \$7 million, which provides funds for ninety-two out of one hundred and seventy-four applications. Applications for the Outdoor Learning Grants are due July 15. Director Duffy shared that the Community Outdoor Athletic Facilities (COAF) program will hold a public comment period beginning in mid-July, and the Local Parks Maintenance (LPM) Program public comment period had just ended. The State Organization for Boating Access is hosting a conference August 28-31 in Tacoma.

Director Duffy announced that RCO is in the process of hiring two grant managers, one for the Recreation team and one for the Grant Services team.

Lastly, Director Duffy shared that she attended the ribbon cutting of the Edmonds Civic Center Playground that used \$2.35 million in Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF), and Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Local Parks funding.

**Chair Willhite** mentioned that the time extensions approved in the consent agenda are not automatic and noted that during the retreat some members expressed concern over the length of some of the extensions. **Member Shiosaki** was concerned with projects requesting both time extensions and additional funds, particularly those projects with older grant awards. He asked what was causing delays in project implementation and wanted to emphasize the importance of using grant funding in a timely manner.

**Marguerite Austin**, Section Manager, explained many time extensions requests are associated with delays due to COVID-19 such as permitting delays, contractor availability, supply chain issues, and capacity. **Director Duffy** noted that staff works closely with sponsors when they are asking for time extensions to understand the need and problem solve where they can.

### *General Public Comment*

None.



## Item 9: Grant Criteria Changes

**Leah Dobey** and **Ben Donatelle**, Policy Specialists, provided an overview of potential grant criteria changes. Ms. Dobey provided a brief summary of their April presentation, noting that making changes to the evaluation criteria is directly in line with goal one in Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) to improve meaningful access for everyone in Washington.

One finding of the equity review showed that RCO grants skew toward places with pre-existing green space.

Mr. Donatelle reminded the board that potential changes to evaluation criteria are under development for select programs including WWRP Local Parks, WWRP Water Access, WWRP Trails, LWCF, Aquatic Land Enhancement Account (ALEA), and YAF. These programs are the most subscribed to by cities and counties for building foundational recreation opportunities. Potential changes will focus on the following criteria: Need, Need Satisfaction, Project Support, and Expansion and Renovation. Mr. Donatelle noted that the Immediacy of Threat criteria, discussed in April, was eliminated as it is a listed criterion in the WWRP statute and will be considered in a later phase.

Mr. Donatelle described two anonymized spray pad case studies from the WWRP Local Parks category to highlight the criteria under review, illustrate the variety within applicant responses to those evaluation questions and in how evaluators interpret the responses. One case study, identified as Project A, was located in an urban western Washington city, and the other, identified as Project B, was located in a rural eastern Washington city. Though the two projects were very similar in scope and project elements, the scoring outcomes were different, illustrating the need to assess existing criteria.

Ms. Dobey explained the *Need* criteria, which asks applicants to describe:

- the need for the new or improved facilities;
- the availability of recreation within the service area;
- whether there is connection with local planning; and,
- Whether there is a connection to underserved population and certain health measures.

Mr. Donatelle shared the potential changes to the Need criteria, noting that the weight of the criteria varies greatly across programs.

- 1) Reconsider the criterion's relative weight and scoring method.
- 2) Provide clear direction on establishing and characterizing the project's need.

- 3) Split criteria components into objective and subjective parts.
- 4) Integrate objective metrics from the Application Data Tool into staff scored criteria.

Member Shiosaki asked if population plays a role in need. Mr. Donatelle noted there is another criterion that addresses population more directly, but applicants may choose to discuss population as part of the need discussion.

Mr. Donatelle shared that staff is looking at simplifying the application data tool process after feedback from users and recommendations from the equity review.

Ms. Dobey explained the current Need Satisfaction related criteria, including project scope, design, and suitability. Notably, there is a broad range of expertise needed by the advisory committee members for scoring these criteria.

Mr. Donatelle shared the potential changes for Need Satisfaction:

- 1) Reward projects with local input as part of design.
- 2) Create consistency in how need satisfaction/design elements are scored across programs.
- 3) Explore how technical criteria are scored.

Ms. Dobey discussed the current Project Support criteria, which are similar across programs and ask applicants how they have informed their communities of the project and what kind of support they have received. Ms. Dobey noted that a high level of support can mean different things in different communities as the types of organizations and resources are not consistent.

Potential changes to Project Support include:

- 1) Reconsider the criterion's relative weight.
- 2) Reward varied methods for informing public and gaining input.
- 3) Reward support in the context of the local community.
- 4) Consider engagement of demographic/socioeconomic groups described in the service area.

Ms. Dobey explained that the current Expansion and Renovation criteria is specific to WWRP Local Parks and WWRP Water Access and asks whether the project is expanding or renovating an existing site and whether there is a cost benefit to investing in existing sites. This concept was a priority from the 2002 and 2008 SCORPs.

Mr. Donatelle suggested one approach is to eliminate this criterion to level the playing field for places that do not have existing features.

Regarding the case studies, Project A scored high, ranking within the top ten percent of projects, while project B scored in the middle fifty percent of projects. Though many aspects of these projects were similar, the differences illustrate the potential impact of the criteria on the outcomes for communities with fewer resources and capacity to respond.

Mr. Donatelle explained that a technical workgroup has been formed and will provide feedback on potential changes to the criteria through July, before the public comment period in August. Final language will be presented to the board in October for a decision, followed by implementation in November. Mr. Donatelle sought one or two board members to join the technical workgroup. Requesting direction, Ms. Dobby asked the board members whether they see SCORP priorities reflected in the potential changes and how they would like to engage with the process.

Members agreed that these were the correct criteria to continue exploring making changes to and directed staff to proceed with public comment and present changes in October. **Member Lam** volunteered to be a part of the working group as a member of the board.

**Member Herzog** pointed out the difference in objective and subjective criteria, noting that staff scored questions could introduce more objectivity.

**Member Burgess** asked about those recommendations that would likely require statutory changes. Director Duffy responded that potential statutory changes will be considered in the future once there is a better understanding of how initial recommendation implementation impacts the programs.

**Member Lam** asked if there is a template for presentations. Ms. Dobby noted that a template was a recommendation of the equity review and something that is being considered, but not as part of this project.

**BREAK: 10:46 AM – 11:00 AM**

### **Item 10: Youth Athletic Facilities Program Review Changes**

**Brock Milliern** provided an overview of the April meeting discussion by summarizing the [YAF program](#) and sharing strengths and challenges with the current program policies. YAF has a strong history of being supported by the Legislature and a fairly low barrier to access as it does not require an eligible plan; however, challenges of YAF include low grant limits, acquisition-only projects are ineligible, and low applications in the small grant category. Mr. Milliern and Mr. Donatelle shared four areas of the YAF policy for discussion and direction:

- 1) Land acquisition projects – currently ineligible. Mr. Milliern shared concern around the potential of grant-funded properties being used for non-eligible projects further down the line, and how acquisition-only projects will compete against other projects.
- 2) Increase grant limits – discussions with local parks staff indicate that general cost increases have impacted building basic projects. Mr. Milliern suggested increasing the small grant limit to \$150,000 to \$300,000 and the large grant limit to around \$750,000 to \$2.5 million.
- 3) Sliding scale for grants – Mr. Donatelle suggested an approach to support projects submitted by jurisdictions eligible for match reduction. This approach would allow for the overall maximum grant limit to increase as match obligation decreases. This would help the applicant develop a complete project while allowing them to take full advantage of their eligible match reduction.
- 4) Limit matching grants – Mr. Donatelle raised the concept of creating limitations around the ability for large multiple-sport complexes to match multiple programs.

After receiving board direction, staff will conduct a public review of these alternatives in July, and final changes will be presented to the board in October for decision.

During discussion board members shared concern with compliance issues for acquisition projects, larger communities outcompeting smaller with increased grant limits, and combining the decrease in match with increased project funding.

**Chair Willhite** directed staff to collect public comment on all four policy proposals and present final recommendations in October for a decision.

**LUNCH: 11:43 PM – 1:00 PM**

### **Item 11: Compliance Corrective Action Policy Proposal**

**Myra Barker**, Compliance Unit Manager, provided an overview of RCO's existing [compliance policies](#), noting that there is not currently a policy that addresses a compliance issue that can be corrected by removing or reversing the inconsistent or incompatible use. Ms. Barker proposed a corrective action policy, which would provide flexibility, incentive, and equity in resolving a compliance issue. It also offers the option for a sponsor to remove or reverse the action that created the issue and return the project area to its intended purpose and function. This policy could be applied to unresolved compliance issues such as encroachment, ineligible structures, undeveloped sites, closed sites, or sites with no public access.

The corrective action policy proposal states: *A sponsor and RCO may mutually agree on a corrective action plan to address a period of non-compliance due to an unresolved compliance issue. The corrective action plan identifies the required actions, steps, and specific timeframe for completion. Failure to complete the corrective action to resolve the compliance issue will result in conversion. The Director may approve an extension.*

Policy criteria may include the location of non-compliant use within the grant boundary, timeframe of the non-compliant use, no conveyance of a property right, and whether the correction can be completed in less than a year are being considered.

**Chair Willhite** suggested that Ms. Barker be diligent in reviewing the criteria so that this policy is not used as a means or interpreted as a right for continuing non-compliance.

**Director Duffy** noted that this policy is meant to be a tool to bring appropriate projects into compliance more easily and quickly than the conversion process.

**Member Ohlson-Kiehn** liked the idea of providing more tools for better compliance through a policy like this. Additionally, where the policy says, *"A sponsor and RCO may mutually agree on a corrective plan..."* Member Ohlson-Kiehn suggested using the phrase *"may mutually develop a corrective plan for RCO's approval"* to make it clear who makes the final decision.

**Member Burgess** asked about the time frame and whether time extensions under this policy would come before the board, and Ms. Barker answered that extensions are currently at the director's discretion and the goal is to agree upon a timeframe that the sponsor could achieve.

Ms. Barker will continue to develop this policy to present at a future meeting.

## **Item 12: Bellingham Frank Geri Non-Conforming Use Update**

**Myra Barker** reminded the board of their approved extension to the City of Bellingham for the nonconforming use at the Frank Geri Field Four through June 2024 and provided an update. Ms. Barker shared the [exception to conversion policy](#) for non-conforming use.

Since the extension was approved in October, the city has awarded a contract for site planning, design, permitting, and related services for one or more tiny house sites, and a site has been selected. The city is not anticipating any issues with meeting the deadline of June 30, 2024, and expects to complete relocation with time to clean up the parking lot and restore it to its intended use.

### Item 13: Cost Increases

**Brock Milliern** reminded the board that last July, as they were setting the budget requests, the board discussed how much costs were increasing on some projects and requested staff develop options on how best to address cost increases. During the April meeting, the board approved cost increases in the ALEA program and discussed five options for WWRP Outdoor Recreation and Habitat Conservation accounts. Mr. Milliern provided a brief recap of the options discussed in April before sharing the staff recommended Option Seven:

*By declaration of the board during exceptional economic times, allow the director to approve ten percent cost increases with priority to partially funded projects, then cost increases, and then alternatives.*

Staff recommends this option because it responds to concerns expressed by the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition (WWRC), preserves existing policy work and direction, keeps the current policy in place unless the board takes further action, and allows the board to act quickly in the face of a future financial crisis.

**Motion:** Move to Approve Resolution 2023-16 Option Seven

**Moved By:** Member **Burgess**

**Seconded by:** Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**

**Decision:** **Approved**

#### *Public Comment*

None.

### Item 14: Approve Grant Awards for the 2023-2025 Biennium

**Marguerite Austin** introduced Item 14 and explained that staff would be requesting approval of final ranked lists and grant awards for the board's grant programs. The 2023-2025 biennial budget provides both state and federal funds. These funds will primarily be used to acquire, develop, restore, and maintain outdoor recreation sites, habitat conservation areas, and working lands. Ms. Austin described the grant application process which began in 2021 and noted that board policies that had been suspended or modified for the previous grant cycle due to COVID-19, were reinstated for this grant round. These policies included match requirements, match reduction and the matching share evaluation criterion. Additionally, the board had approved cost increase policies for farms and forests since the last grant round.

### **Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA)**

DeAnn Beck, Senior Outdoor Grant Manager, provided an overview of the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account ([ALEA](#)) program for the 2022 grant cycle. The ten applications submitted this grant round, could all be funded with the approved \$5,858,000 from the Legislature for this biennium. Ms. Beck requested approval of the final ranked list and grant awards for this program.

**Motion:** Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-17**

**Moved By:** Member **Shiosaki**

**Seconded by:** Member **Herzog**

**Decision:** **Approved**

#### *Public Comment*

None.

### **Boating Facilities Program (BFP)**

Karl Jacobs, Senior Outdoor Grant Manager, provided an overview of the Boating Facilities Program ([BFP](#)). The Legislature approved \$13.8 million for this program this biennium, which is split equally between state agency and local agency applications. Mr. Jacobs requested approval of the final ranked lists for this program and asked the board to award grants as depicted in the funding tables.

**Motion:** Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-18**

**Moved By:** Member **Lam**

**Seconded by:** Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**

**Decision:** **Approved**

#### *Public Comment*

None.

### **Firearms and Archery Range Recreation (FARR)**

Karl Jacobs provided a brief background on the Firearms and Archery Range Recreation ([FARR](#)) program and highlighted the six projects submitted this year. The Legislature provided \$840,000 for FARR projects for this biennium. Mr. Jacobs requested approval of the final ranked list and full funding for all of the projects.

**Motion:** Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-19**

**Moved By:** Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**

**Seconded by:** Member **Burgess**

**Decision:** **Approved**

*Public Comment*

None.

**Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities (NOVA)**

Marguerite Austin provided an overview of the Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) program for both the [Education and Enforcement](#) and [Trails](#) categories. This biennium, the Legislature approved \$12,063,000 in gas tax dollars. Ms. Austin highlighted that while match is not required for the NOVA program, ninety-two out of the ninety-six applications had match.

Ms. Austin noted a mistake in the briefing materials and asked to amend the resolution to read: *Table 1 – Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities, 2023-2025; as amended to show Ferry County, Eagle Track Raceway Improvement (22-1960) as an Alternate on Table 1 for the Off-Road Vehicle category.*

Staff recommended board approval of the final ranked lists and grant awards for the four categories within this program with the above amendment.

**Motion:** Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-20**

**Moved By:** Member **Herzog**

**Seconded by:** Member **Burgess**

**Decision:** **Approved as amended**

*Public Comment*

None.

**Recreational Trails Program (RTP)**

Karl Jacobs provided an overview of the federal Recreational Trails Program ([RTP](#)) noting that while this program only requires twenty percent match, applicants consistently bring more than the minimum. The Legislature approved spending authority of up to \$5 million for this biennium and staff recommended board approval of the final ranked lists and grant awards as depicted in the funding tables.

**Motion:** Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-21**

**Moved By:** Member **Craig**

**Seconded by:** Member **Shiosaki**

**Decision:** **Approved**



*Public Comment*

None.

**Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)**

Marguerite Austin provided an overview of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP), which includes twelve grant categories: [Critical Habitat](#), [Natural Areas](#), [Riparian Protection](#), [State Land Restoration and Enhancement](#), [Urban Wildlife Habitat](#), [Farmland Preservation](#), [Forestland Preservation](#), [Local Parks](#), [State Lands Development and Renovation](#), [State Parks, Trails, and Water Access](#).

This grant cycle there were 165 projects requesting \$154,053,993. For this biennium, the Legislature approved \$120 million for WWRP. Ms. Austin noted that there are six categories within WWRP that are undersubscribed and six that are oversubscribed. The staff recommended lists will fully fund ninety-four projects and partially fund eight projects and includes a list of alternates.

**Motion:** Move to Approve Resolution 2023-22

**Moved By:** Member **Herzog**

**Seconded by:** Member **Craig**

**Decision:** **Approved**

*Public Comment*

None.

**Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF)**

DeAnn Beck provided an overview of the Youth Athletic Facilities ([YAF](#)) program. The Legislature provided \$10,440,000 for this biennium. Board policy is to allocate ten percent of the funds to Small Grant category projects and ninety percent to Large Grant category projects. Ms. Beck noted that this year Small projects requested only \$139,500, or 1.3 percent of the available funds. Per board policy, all remaining funds are allocated to projects in the YAF Large category, resulting in full funding for both lists. Staff recommended approving the final ranked list and grant awards for YAF.

**Motion:** Move to Approve Resolution 2023-23

**Moved By:** Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**

**Seconded by:** Member **Lam**

**Decision:** **Approved**

## *Public Comment*

None.

**Chair Willhite** made note that in approving these lists, two hundred sixty-eight projects have been funded for a total of \$158.8 million.

### **BREAK: 2:27 PM – 2:45 PM**

#### **Item 15: 2022-2023 Grant Cycle Survey Results**

**Tessa Cencula**, Volunteer and Grants Process Coordinator, provided a briefing of the applicant and advisory committee surveys from the 2022-2023 grant cycle.

Ms. Cencula described that to make the advisory committee survey quicker and easier to respond to, the survey was restructured into two shorter separate surveys, a technical review survey and an evaluation survey. A summary of the surveys, which includes questions, comments, and conclusions, can be found in the [materials](#) for this meeting.

The results of the surveys are used at the end of each round to improve the next grant cycle. Ms. Cencula described the improvements made following the 2020-2021 surveys, and the status of the improvements, which are detailed in the [materials](#). Staff will continue incorporating these improvements for the 2024 grant round. Additionally, the 2022-2023 surveys prompted several new action items. Based on the applicant survey, staff plans to:

- Implement near-term Equity Report priority actions prior to the 2024 and 2026 grant cycles, which includes the policy team’s work to update and revise key evaluation criteria.
- Consider ways to streamline the application process. Staff is piloting a simplified pre-application process in PRISM for the Community Outdoor Athletics Facilities program, which will be assessed for use in other programs.
- Consider how best to provide increased technical assistance to applicants after the results are posted by offering additional and more consistent contact with outdoor grants managers and exploring PRISM enhancements.
- Update Advisory Committee charters to achieve improved social, geographic, and sectoral representation among committee participants.
- Offer additional applicant workshops for first-time applicants for specific grant programs.
- Continue remote virtual review and evaluation meetings, which makes applying more accessible to potential applicants around the state.

Action items based on the advisory committee survey include:

- Provide a more detailed overview of process and expectations as early as possible and offer a sample scoring experience to help advisors understand expectations.
- Create more space for advisors to connect in the virtual environment and consider in-person networking opportunities for select committees.
- Explore process changes to better prepare first-time committee members by offering more guidance and opportunities for discussion of scoring criteria.
- Update conflict of interest and ethics policy for committee members, which will include providing and requiring bias awareness training prior to grant review meetings.

Immediate next steps for staff will be to follow-up with respondents of both the applicant and advisory committee surveys to explain how their feedback is being incorporated. Ms. Cencula noted that this follow-up, which is important in letting respondents know that their feedback is valuable and has been incorporated into future plans, has not always been done. Improvements to the survey process for the 2024 grant cycle will continue as well.

**Chair Willhite** would like to see tribal outreach reflected in the priorities of the next cycle. **Kyle Guzlas**, Grants Service Section Manager, noted that by building more relationships around the state, the number of tribal applicants will continue to increase, a notable trend that has been occurring over the last two to three grant cycles. Additionally, in the list of applicant survey action items, Chair Willhite wanted “sectoral” changed to “tribal nations” and would like diversity training for board members to be made a priority.

Addressing the action items, **Member Craig** wondered what staff capacity was for the additional workload created. Mr. Guzlas shared that, based on feedback, staff are meeting the need and recognized the existing large workload of grant managers. **Director Duffy** added that RCO is analyzing how to best address capacity issues in light of new and growing responsibilities.

### **Item 16: Grant Review and Evaluation Procedures**

**Kyle Guzlas** presented the board with a request to approve the continuation of the virtual presentation process for board grant programs. Mr. Guzlas shared [Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\) 286-13-020](#) which requires the board to adopt a competitive evaluation process to guide it in allocating funds to grant applicants, and these processes are described in each grant’s program manual. The board has adopted two evaluation processes, written and presentation, for its programs.

Written application materials are available to the advisory committee using the PRISM review and evaluation module.

The presentation process involves an applicant attending an evaluation meeting to provide a presentation of their project while addressing the board adopted evaluation criteria. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, presentations were held only in-person, and a virtual process was adopted in 2020, highlighting certain inequities of the original in-person process.

As outlined in the [materials](#), the equity review recommended specific operational strategies:

- Make remote presentations (utilizing online meeting platforms) a permanent option for applicants.
- Implement strategies that help improve social, geographic, and sectoral representation within advisory committees.
- Develop a recruitment strategy to improve representation within advisory committees.
- Continue to offer advisory committee member stipends for community participants and nonprofit/tribal representatives.

These strategies work to reduce barriers to historically underserved populations' participation in RCO grant programs, as well as reduce barriers for advisory committee participation.

Staff recommends approving the continuation of virtual presentation review and evaluation meetings and to delegate the authority of this procedural action to the RCO director.

**Motion:** Move to Approve **Resolution 2023-24**

**Moved By:** Member **Shiosaki**

**Seconded by:** Member **Burgess**

**Decision:** **Approved**

#### *Public Comment*

None.

## Item 17: State Agency Partner Reports

### Governor's Office

**Jon Snyder**, Policy Specialist, shared that Governor Inslee was honored by the Rails to Trails Conservancy with the 2023 Rail Champion Award for his work on the Olympic Discovery Trail and the Palouse to Cascades Trail, which are both part of the Great American Rail Trail.

On July 19, a report on outdoor education will be discussed on TVW. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), RCO, and State Parks will be participating in this opportunity for agencies to share their work. RCO's Kyle Guzlas will be in attendance to discuss NCLI and other outdoor education grants.

Mr. Snyder will be sharing the newly released SCORP with colleagues in other states who are working on their own versions.

On June 27, Mr. Snyder attended the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) Tribal Summit in Tacoma. The topic of the summit was energy siting in sacred places, where attendees heard the perspective from tribes and their historical preservation officers.

**Chair Willhite** asked Mr. Snyder to convey to the governor the board's appreciation for leadership and share with him the amount of funds allocated during this meeting.

### Department of Fish and Wildlife

**Member Amy Windrope** reported that Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) received \$24 million for a biodiversity package that will fund three main areas: habitat conservation, species conservation, and policy and outreach. Member Windrope will make the plan available to the board.

Member Windrope recognized the career of Paul Dahmer who is retiring after twenty-seven years as WDFW's assistant lands division manager. Darric Lowery will fill this role. Travis Weller will be the acquisition grants manager, which is a new position at WDFW.

The Lands 2020 Proposal Cycle, an annual internal process, will go out for public comment in November. Additionally, WDFW has submitted five proposals to the America the Beautiful Challenge and has been invited to submit two more proposals.

### State Parks and Recreation Commission

**Member Peter Herzog** shared the State Parks Biennial Budget, which has \$254 million in the operating budget and \$100 million in capital budget. Currently, State Parks is

sixty-nine percent self-funded through the Discover Pass, camping fees, and other fees. Department of Licensing Donations account for eleven percent of the budget for State Parks.

Member Herzog highlighted the *Suciasuarus rex* being designated as Washington's official state dinosaur through HB 1020.

There was a recent ribbon cutting for the Willapa Hills Trail, State Route Six crossing near Chehalis. This has been a considerable project that placed a steel truss bridge in three sections to cross the highway. Member Herzog shared that State Park manages 466 miles of rail trails across five different trails, 4.46 miles of rail tunnel, and 6.25 miles of rail bridges.

Member Herzog reminded the board that the State Organization for Boating Access (SOBA) will take place in Tacoma August 28 -31 and is sponsored by State Parks, RCO, and WDFW. State Parks is Washington's recreational safety administrator and manages all the contracts with local marine patrols, provides safety and education trainings for local jurisdictions, and manages accident reporting and sewage pump out stations.

### **Department of Natural Resources**

**Member Kristen Ohlson-Kiehn** shared that decision packages submitted by Department of Natural Resources (DNR) resulted in \$10 million of funding for this biennium for critical maintenance funding, largely due to the advocacy from partners.

DNR received half of the requested funding for Protect Public Lands and Tribal Rights, which includes more funding for law enforcement. DNR received funding for the interagency work with tribes to address recreational impacts and the Statewide Recreation Planning Process, which will launch at the Tribal Summit, as well as for a first foods program.

Member Ohlson-Kiehn noted that DNR has been scaling back on requests for capital funding in order to focus more on maintenance. DNR requested \$5.8 million from the Legislature and received \$2.9 million, highlighting the continued need for the WWRP state lands development grant for renovations and expansion. Additionally, Member Ohlson-Kiehn highlighted the backlogs created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have worked to identify creative solutions to clear these backlogs.

DNR has a conservation program that manages over 169,000 acres of natural resource conservation areas and natural area preserves. DNR submitted a decision package to identify essential conservation areas across the state utilizing heritage data. DNR

received \$5.1 million in capital funding for preserving and accessing natural areas as well as \$120,000 for one-time use of a stewardship account.

**Member Craig** asked Member Ohlson-Kiehn to expand on the first foods program. Member Ohlson-Kiehn explained that over the pandemic, there was a large percentage of tribal populations who experienced difficulty accessing first foods and highlighted the need for communities' ability to access first foods. DNR tribal staff will work with tribes where first foods can be grown and establish pilot projects.

**ADJOURN: 3:59 PM**

The next meeting will be a travel meeting on October 24 and 25, 2023 in Port Townsend, Washington. The meeting day will be in-person at Northwest Maritime Center, 431 Water Street, Port Townsend, Washington 98368 and available virtually on Zoom and TVW. Please note, one day of the meeting will be a tour and available in-person only. The agenda is currently in development.

**Approved by:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Willhite", written over a horizontal line.

**Ted Willhite, Chair**