



Proposed Agenda
January 28-29, 2025
Retreat
Regular Meeting

Retreat Day In-person Location: Conference Room, 415 Capitol Way North, Olympia, Washington, 98501.

Meeting Day In-person: Room 172, First Floor, Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street, SE, Olympia, WA.

These public meeting locations allows the public to provide comments and listen to the meeting as required by the Open Public Meeting Act. This requirement can be waived via HB 1329 if there is a declaration of emergency or if an agency determines that a public meeting cannot safely be held. If an emergency occurs, remote technology will be the primary meeting source.

Location Virtually (Meeting Day Only):

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_BOIfI4jFRK249V9tO6CTnw

Phone Option: (669) 900-6833 - **Webinar ID:** 827 3748 5719

Order of Presentation: In general, each agenda item will include a short staff presentation, followed by board discussion. The board only makes decisions following the public comment portion of the agenda decision item.

Public Comment: General public comments are encouraged to be submitted in advance of the meeting in written form. Public comment on agenda items is also permitted. If you wish to comment, you may e-mail your request or written comments to Julia.McNamara@rco.wa.gov, board liaison.

COVID Precautions: Masks and hand sanitizer will be made available. If you are feeling ill, the zoom format is reliable resource for home viewing

Special Accommodations: People with disabilities needing an accommodation to participate in RCO public meetings are invited to contact Leslie Frank by phone (360) 789-7889 or e-mail Leslie.Frank@rco.wa.gov.

TUESDAY JANUARY 29, 2025 (RETREAT)

OPENING AND MANAGEMENT REPORTS

9:00 a.m.	Call to Order <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll Call and Determination of Quorum• Approval of Agenda (Decision)• Chair Remarks	<i>Chair Shiosaki</i>
9:10 a.m.	1. Board Equity Work	<i>Brock Milliern</i>
9:40 a.m.	2. Equity Training	<i>Buffalo Cloud Consulting</i>
10:30 a.m.	Break	
10:45 a.m.	3. Equity Training	<i>Buffalo Cloud Consulting</i>
12:00 p.m.	Lunch	
1:00 p.m.	4. Equity Training	
3:00 p.m.	Break	
3:15 p.m.	5. Assessment of Recent Changes	<i>Leah Dobey Ben Donatelle</i>
4:00 p.m.	6. 2025-2027 Policy Work Plan	<i>Brock Milliern</i>
5:00 p.m.	Recess	

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 29, 2025 (MEETING)

OPENING AND MANAGEMENT REPORTS

9:00 a.m.	Call to Order <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll Call and Determination of Quorum• Approval of Agenda (Decision)• Chair remarks	<i>Chair Shiosaki</i>
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9:10 a.m.

7. Consent Agenda (Decision)

Chair Shiosaki

- A. Board Meeting Minutes
 - October 29-30, 2024
- B. Time Extensions
 - Department of Natural Resources, Kennedy Creek Floodplain Forest Restoration, 20-1613
 - King County, Foothills Trail Development 252nd Ave-Mud Mountain Road, 16-1362
 - Port of Port Townsend, Gardiner Boat Launch Improvement, 20-2083
- C. Waiver Request
 - Request to Waive the Boating Facilities Program Multisite Cost Limit: Department of Fish and Wildlife, ADA Parking and Restroom Replacement, 24-2523
- D. Advisor Recognition (4)

Resolution 2025-01

9:20 a.m.

8. Director's Report

- A. Director's Report
- B. Legislative and Policy Update
- C. Grant Management Report
- D. Grant Services Report
- E. Performance Report (*written only*)
- F. Fiscal Report (*written only*)

*Megan Duffy
Brock Milliern
Karen Edwards
Kyle Guzlas
Bart Lynch
Mark Jarasitis*

BOARD BUSINESS: BRIEFING

10:00 a.m.

BREAK

10:15 a.m.

General Public Comment (limit 3 minutes please) for issues not identified on the agenda.

BOARD BUSINESS: REQUEST FOR DIRECTION

10:25 a.m.

9. Farm and Forest Account Policy Changes

Nick Norton

- A. Ten percent non-state non-federal match
 - B. Cost Increases
-

BOARD BUSINESS: BRIEFING

10:55 a.m.

10. Featured Projects

Allison Dellwo

- Port of Anacortes, Cap Sante Marina RV Park, 20-1671
- City of Snoqualmie, Centennial Fields Playground, 20-1739

11:45 a.m. LUNCH

BOARD BUSINESS: REQUEST FOR DIRECTION

12:50 p.m. 11. Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Urban Wildlife Category Terminology Update *Julia McNamara*
Ben Donatelle

BOARD BUSINESS: DECISION

1:20 p.m. 12. Policy Waiver Request: Pre-agreement Cost for California Creek Estuary Park, 18-1945 *Rachelle Lim*

Resolution 2025-02

Public comment will occur prior to adopting the resolution. Please limit comments to three minutes

1:40 p.m. 13. Eligibility for Acquisition: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Sol Duc River Access, 22-1734 *Marguerite Austin*

Resolution 2025-03

Public comment will occur prior to adopting the resolution. Please limit comments to three minutes.

BOARD BUSINESS: REQUEST FOR DIRECTION

1:55 p.m. 14. Acquisition *Nick Norton*

- A. Existing Public Property
- B. Combination Timeline
- C. Earnest Payment Eligibility

BOARD BUSINESS: BRIEFING

2:40 p.m. 15. Annual Compliance Report *Myra Barker*

*Ashly Arambul
Chris Popek*

3:25 p.m.

16. State Agency Partner Reports

- Department of Natural Resources
- State Parks and Recreation Commission
- Department of Fish and Wildlife

*Kristen Ohlson-Kiehn
Peter Herzog
Amy Windrope*

3:55 p.m.

Adjourn

Next Meeting: Regular Meeting- April 22-23, 2024. Room 172, Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street, Olympia, Washington, 98501

DRAFT

RCO

January 6, 2025

By Buffalo Cloud Consulting, LLC

Draft Agenda: Enhancing Recreation and Conservation Through Equity & Accountability

Purpose:

In light of prior board actions and the Prevention Institute recommendations, review and consider other methods of integrating equity, public engagement, and accountability into recreation and conservation projects, using case studies and frameworks to evaluate current practices and identify growth opportunities.

Learning Objectives:

1. Build an understanding of historic and present-day injustices in outdoor equity and greenspace access.
2. Explore examples of emerging funding and design models that promote equitable community engagement and resource allocation.
3. Analyze case studies and discuss equitable decision-making processes.
4. Identify potential strategies to further advance equity within the board's role and organizational mission.

Agenda

9:00–9:25 | Welcome and Grounding the Day (25 minutes)

- **Activity:**
 - Centering
 - Introductions and community agreements (e.g., assume good intent, active listening, equitable participation).
 - **Reflection:** [Layla June video](#) (13:30 mins)
- **Outcome:** Establish a respectful and open environment for dialogue.

9:25–10:10 | Context and Framing by RCO (45 minutes)

- **Presentation by RCO Staff:**
 - Overview of RCO's and the Board's equity work, including budget proviso, equity-focused policies, and Executive Orders.
 - Highlight key milestones and current priorities (e.g. implementation of equity recommendations, technical assistance for communities, etc.)
- **Discussion:**
 - Board members reflect on their role in past equity decisions (e.g. recent criteria change process)
- **Outcome:** Ground participants in RCO's and RCFB's historical and ongoing equity work.

10:10–10:55 | Understanding Equity in Recreation and Conservation (45 minutes)

- **Presentation:** Overview of the NRPA framework and its relevance to equity in recreation and conservation funding.
 - **Discussion:**
 - Explore how the NRPA framework aligns with the Board’s goals.
 - Highlight insights from the **Prevention Institute budget proviso review**, including community-based approaches like People, Parks, and Power.
 - **Outcome:** Participants understand how NRPA principles and Prevention Institute models can be applied to support equity and accountability.
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10:55–11:10 | Break (15 minutes)

11:10–12:00 | Case Studies: Equitable Practices in Action (50 minutes)

- **Case Studies (Breakout Groups):**
 - **Shade Sheds in Low-Income Neighborhoods:** Addressing heat inequities through small-scale investments.
 - **Inclusive Playgrounds:** Creating spaces that accommodate children of all abilities.
 - **Equitable Community Engagement:** Models for engaging marginalized communities in project planning.
 - **Facilitated Activity:**
 - Analyze case studies and identify key takeaways.
 - Share insights with the larger group.
 - **Outcome:** Build an understanding of how to embed equity into conservation and recreation projects.
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12:00–1:00pm | Lunch (1 hour)

1:00–1:45 | What is an Equity Lens? (45 minutes)

- **Facilitated Conversation:**
 - Review examples of equitable decision-making processes.
 - Discuss how an equity lens can inform Board work.
 - **Outcome:**
 - Identify key elements of an equity lens
-

1:45–2:00 | Reflections and Wrap-Up (15 minutes)

- **Activity:**
 - Board members reflect on what resonated with them today
 - Set next steps for self-learning.
 - **Outcome:** Participants leave with greater understanding of how equity connects to their work
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RECREATION AND CONSERVATION FUNDING BOARD SUMMARY MINUTES

Date: October 29, 2024

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

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Members:

Michael Shiosaki, Chair	Seattle	Bob Bugert	Leavenworth
Shiloh Burgess	Wenatchee	Kristen Ohlson-Kiehn	Designee, Department of Natural Resources
Trang Lam	Camas	Amy Windrope	Designee, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Kitty Craig	Seattle	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 Michael Shiosaki called the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board meeting to order at 9:11 AM after technical difficulty, and **Julia McNamara**, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Board Liaison, performed roll call, determining quorum. Member Windrope was absent at the time of roll call.

Chair Shiosaki recognized Christine Mahler's time at the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition. Ms. Mahler will start in her new role at the Kubota Garden Foundation in the new year.

Motion: Move to Approve **October 29, 2024**, Agenda

Moved By: Member **Herzog**

Seconded by: Member **Lam**

Decision: **Approved**

Item 1: Consent Agenda

Chair Shiosaki noted that the consent agenda includes the July 24-25 and August 7 meeting minutes, eleven time-extensions, one advisor recognition, a standing calendar, and 2025 meeting dates.

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-11**, Consent Agenda
Moved By: Member **Bugert**
Seconded by: Member **Craig**
Decision: **Approved**

Item 2: Director's Report

Director Megan Duffy introduced RCO's new tribal affairs director, Dawn Pullin, and announced the retirement of salmon section manager, Marc Duboiski. Director Duffy addressed the number of time extension requests, noting requests peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, and the overall trend for time extension requests is declining.

The Community Outdoor Athletic Facilities fund recently awarded \$12.5 million for projects across the state. There were 204 applications, requesting \$152 million. This program used a pre-application process to reduce the administrative burden, and 130 applicants were invited to complete final applications. Funding was awarded to fifteen projects. An analysis is underway to see how many applicants were in underserved communities and/or participated in Planning for Recreation Access. Once complete, the analysis will be presented to the board. RCO requested additional funding for the Communities Outdoor Athletic Facilities fund in the upcoming Legislative session to fund additional projects on the ranked list.

Policy Update

Brock Milliern, policy and legislative director, provided an overview of the budget process and timeline. The board approved budget requests in August and budgets were submitted to the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management on September 12. A budget forecast, which occurs in even numbered years, is expected in November and a difficult budget session is anticipated due to the \$500 million downturn in the June revenue forecast.

The Governor's budget may be available in early December. Mr. Milliern will provide a comparison of what was requested versus included in the Governor's budget, along with the House and Senate budgets throughout the Legislative session. Additionally, written updates on budget and policy related issues will be provided to the board about every two weeks starting in mid-December. Mr. Milliern expects more policy bills related to salmon than for recreation and conservation.

RCO recently signed a contract with Earth Economics to conduct an economic study for recreation. Mr. Milliern will provide an update on the study in January and expects it to be completed by the end of April.

Grant Services Report

Member Windrope joined the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

Kyle Guzlas, grant services section manager, provided updates on two partnership youth outdoor grant programs, No Child Left Inside and Outdoor Learning Grants.

RCO has administered the [No Child Left Inside](#) program in collaboration with Washington State Parks since 2015 to provide opportunities for underserved and underrepresented youth to play and experience the outdoors. The program received record funding for this biennium of \$7 million, funding 109 programs. Over a two-year period, almost 58,000 underserved Washington youth benefited from this state investment. The program funds environmental education, leadership development, outdoor recreation and adventure, stewardship activities, and camp programs improving mental and physical health and enhancing academic performance and social connections to the community and land. In early 2024, Washington State Parks and RCO worked with the advisory committee to make several policy modifications to the program in response to feedback received over the past three grant cycles and to further amplify the equity components of the program. This included development of new evaluation criteria, modification of match requirements, and new allowable costs. The Wilderness Society launched a national campaign called Nature Awaits supporting state efforts for increasing equitable access to nature. The campaign highlights four state's efforts, Colorado, New Mexico, North Carolina and Washington's very own NCLI program.

The first [Outdoor Learning Grants](#) Cohort Workshop was held in September and included a panel discussion on meaningful relationships with tribes and integration of the state's [Since Time Immemorial](#) curriculum. Mapping is being developed for the Outdoor Learning Grants showing the 251 schools where twenty-seven sponsors conducted outdoor learning experiences in the past academic school year, the Washington State Department of Health Environmental Health Disparity ranking, and the Office of Financial Management Overburdened Community layer. While many high-need areas are reached through this program, there are many communities that are not. RCO plans to incorporate more layers, including the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's targeted equity funding tool, to further display the needs around the state, drive the evaluation process, and how outreach is conducted.

General Public Comment

Jennifer Kidder, campus director for Nature Bridge and board chair of Washington Outdoor Schools Coalition, shared a unique opportunity for RCO to collaborate with the Washington Outdoor Schools Coalition and the House capital budget committee chair, Representative Steve Tharinger, to create a new competitive grant opportunity to support the expansion of outdoor schools in Washington to reach 85,000 students. Capital funds are needed for infrastructure and facility improvements to provide equitable access and serve as many eligible students as possible. Questions or concerns can be directed at lobbyist Joanna Grist.

Christine Mahler, executive director Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition, shared her personal gratitude for the partnership with RCO and the board. Ms. Mahler commended Director Duffy and staff for their professionalism and friendship over the past eight years and looks forward to continuing the partnership in her new role at the Kubota Gardens.

Item 3: Road Usage Charge

Policy specialist **Adam Cole** and **Reema Griffith**, Washington State Transportation Commission director, provided a briefing on the state's efforts to transition from a fuel tax to a road usage charge and how this might impact recreational investments. Currently, Washington State funds road maintenance through a gas tax. Due to a projection based on the increased fuel efficiency of modern vehicles and the introduction of electric vehicles, the state legislature directed the Washington State Transportation Commission to conduct a feasibility study on a road usage charge. The study determined that a gas tax is not sustainable to fund road maintenance, and a road usage charge will produce more revenue than the current gas tax.

Mr. Cole defined highway roads as state-highway, county, and municipal roads built and maintained through the State's gas tax; and non-highway roads as roads that take people to recreation sites from city parks to the back country and which do not benefit from the State's gas tax. Non-highway roads are maintained by federal, state, local, or tribal agencies.

Several programs benefit from funding provided through gas tax refunds including the board's Boating Facilities Program and Non-highway Offroad Vehicles Activities program. Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Washington State Parks and Recreation receive a direct allocation from the gas tax for Non-highway Offroad Vehicles Activities. Additionally, Washington State Parks and Recreation receives an allocation for their Winter

Recreation Snowmobile Program and uses gas tax supported boating investments as match to its federally funded Marine Law Enforcement Training and Boater Safety programs.

Ms. Griffith explained that in 2012 the Washington State Transportation Commission was directed to assess the suitability of a road usage charge as a long-term revenue source that could replace the current state gas tax. A road usage charge would gradually replace the current gas tax and implement a per-mile fee instead of a per-gallon tax as taxing fuel is no longer a reliable and equitable source of funding.

Another mandate, Clean Cars II, requires 100 percent of new vehicle sales to be electric vehicles or plug-in electric vehicles by 2035. Washington ranks second in the nation in electric vehicle market share with 19 percent of new vehicles registered in 2023 being electric or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. A conservative estimation forecasts that by 2050 the gas tax will decrease from the current \$1.3 billion to below \$300 million in revenue.

Ms. Griffith explained key findings of the assessment including the cost impact on taxpayers to transition to a road usage charge, emphasizing that the road usage charge would not be paid on top of the gas tax. Drivers will continue to pay the gas tax at the distributor level and will be given credit for the taxes paid based on the vehicle manufacturer's miles per gallon estimates and an odometer reading. Keeping the gas tax in place supports seamless interstate travel; enables small, incremental payments toward road usage charge for gas cars; serves as a natural backstop against tax evasion; ensures Washington State can meet its legal requirements for outstanding bonds; and ensures existing gas tax revenue distributions stay in place. Additionally, the vehicle driven, not how far you drive will determine the impact of the road usage charge to drivers relative to gas taxes on rural, long-distance, and low-income drivers, for example, drivers of vehicles with lower fuel efficiency currently pay more for fuel and fuel tax but would pay less under a flat road usage charge. Today's fuel tax represents 4 percent of low-income household expenditures but would increase if fuel tax increases; however, targeted discounts can be offered with a road usage charge.

Regarding privacy impact, Ms. Griffith explained the State Legislature has been urged to enact privacy protection laws if a road usage charge is enacted. The only necessary new piece of information that the Department of Licensing does not already collect is total miles driven. Drivers would decide how to report their miles. Five options have been tested in a year-long statewide simulation: odometer reading; pre-paid mileage permit; MileMapper smartphone application; and plug-in devices with or without global positioning system.

A road usage charge enrollment pilot and survey was conducted last year where drivers experienced signing up for the road usage charge and learned about its personal impacts. Seventy percent of participants were satisfied with the payment and reporting process which took about five minutes to complete. Most participants said it is important to them to be able to claim out-of-state and off-road miles exemptions, regardless of if they are in an interior or border county, and 80 percent of participants preferred a standard deduction of 200 miles per year.

The Washington State Transportation Commission recommends the State Legislature consider a road usage charge program beginning with a voluntary pay-by-mile system of collection on select vehicle types (electric and hybrid vehicles) in 2025. The program would establish an initial per-mile rate of 2.5 cents per mile for all subject vehicles, require annual odometer readings of participating vehicles during initial implementation, and personal privacy protections would be enacted. The road usage charge would dedicate revenue to preservation and maintenance of highways. During the transition the recommendation is the current gas tax distribution is maintained. Exemptions, gas tax credits, enforcement, and use of revenue will need to be determined three to five years into the implementation process, with a longer-term decision being to address multi-state cooperation. Key decisions would need to be updated and revisited periodically.

The overall objective of a road usage charge is to generate sustainable, long-term revenue for transportation that ensures fairness and privacy. The final report from the study is available at www.waroadusagecharge.org.

Chair Shiosaki emphasized the importance of maintaining the current level of funding for gas tax supported recreation investments and maintenance of nonhighway roads during any transition from one program to another.

Member Lam asked how freight is handled in a road usage charge. Ms. Griffith explained only passenger vehicles were involved in the study, but diesel tax and gas tax are put into the same fuel fund. Research is currently underway on how a road usage charge would apply to freight vehicles on the east coast.

Member Herzog asked if the funding formula would be maintained. Ms. Griffith noted the Washington State Transportation Commission is encouraging the funding levels for programs funded from the motor vehicle fund to remain static, but revenue for these may decline over time if gas tax revenues overall decline. Mr. Cole explained that only 1 percent of the gas tax revenue in the motor vehicle fund is allocated to RCO programs. Ms. Griffith noted there is an ongoing conversation around where any road usage

charge revenues would go, whether into the motor vehicle fund which would combine them with gas tax revenues, or another account exclusively for road usage charge revenues.

Member Windrope asked if the board could offer support this Legislative session. Ms. Griffith anticipates a proposal to be introduced this session and would appreciate any feedback and support from the board. **Director Duffy** added that **Brock Milliern** has been meeting with Legislators to make sure there is awareness of the impacts of a road usage charge on RCO programs.

Mr. Cole will provide an update in January.

BREAK: 10:36 A.M. – 10:50 A.M.

Item 4: Request to Waive Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account Eligibility Requirement for Property Replacement: City of Issaquah, Sammamish Cove, 93-8917

Myra Barker, compliance unit manager, provided an overview of the City of Issaquah's Sammamish Cove Park project ([RCO #93-9817](#)). Issaquah has approved construction of an underground stormwater pipeline at the park, creating a partial conversion of approximately 0.9-acres of the 19-acre grant funded property. The park was purchased through the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account that requires projects to meet a location eligibility criterion of being located on navigable waters of the state. The board has the authority through [Washington Administrative Code 286-13-160\(3\)\(iv\)](#) to waive the original grant program eligibility criteria for replacement property for a conversion

Due to high private real estate costs and no interest from homeowner associations to sell public access to Lake Sammamish, Issaquah determined there were no reasonable options for replacement property on the only navigable water body within city limits. The city is exploring potential replacement properties located on non-navigable bodies of water. Potential replacement property is being identified adjacent to Issaquah Creek and East Issaquah Creek. These properties would protect wetland and riparian areas consistent with the goals of the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account and supports the city's plan to expand open space along creeks.

Staff recommend waiving the requirement that replacement property is located on navigable waterbody for the partial conversion at the Sammamish Cove Park.

Chair Shiosaki noted the stormwater drain would be underground and asked for more information on why a conversion was necessary. Ms. Barker explained that there is language that allows for underground utilities that have minimal impact; however, the

construction would require a trench to be dug causing significant impact to the wetland. Following construction, the area will be restored as required mitigation for the permit for the stormwater pipeline project permit. There will be riprap placed and a cage-like structure at the discharge point of the pipeline and would be visible.

Member Herzog asked if the pipeline would cause a permanent impediment to the function of the wetland. Ms. Barker noted the impact of the construction on the intended purpose of the grant is causing the need for the partial conversion.

Member Bugert asked how to tell when the City of Issaquah has found a sufficient replacement property. Ms. Barker explained it is a sponsor's responsibility to provide justification that supports the proposed replacement property provides at least equal value and equal usefulness.

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-12**

Moved By: Member **Bugert**

Seconded by: Member **Lam**

Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Item 5: Request to Reduce the Non-state, Non-federal Match: Columbia Land Trust, Trout Lake Valley Agricultural Easement Phase 4, 19-1539

Andrea Hood, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of Trout Lake Valley Phase Four Agricultural Easement ([RCO #19-1539](#)). In 2019, the board awarded Columbia Land Trust a Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – Farmland Preservation grant to purchase four development rights through three conservation easements to permanently protect 101 acres of farmland. At the time, the program had a 10 percent non-state, non-federal match requirement. Following the award, land values increased dramatically and in 2023 the board approved a cost increase for the project. To meet the match requirements, Columbia Land Trust secured federal funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, amounting to \$658,500 or 46.5 percent of the total match requirement, leaving only \$49,750 or 3.5 percent left to meet the required 50 percent total sponsor match of \$708,250.

Staff recommended approving Columbia Land Trust's request to reduce the non-state, non-federal match requirement from 10 percent to 3.5 percent for this project. Additional details on this request can be found in the [meeting materials](#).

Member Herzog asked what the original purpose of the non-federal match limit was. Ms. Hood understood the original intent to be a local contribution. **Director Duffy** noted [Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045\(4\)](#) that says the board may require a local investment and the board passed Resolution 2022-05 to waive the match requirement for the 2022 and 2024 grant rounds. Ms. Hood added that the Columbia Land Trust submitted a letter detailing that Klickitat County does not have a local revenue source, which puts them at a disadvantage compared to counties with local funds.

Member Bugert noted there a precedent has been set to waive this requirement with similar requests at the last two meetings.

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-13**
Moved By: Member **Burgess**
Seconded by: Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**
Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Item 6: Grant Program Framework

Marguerite Austin, recreation and conservation grants section manager, explained the biennial grants cycle, adopted in 2011, and provided an overview of the 2024 Fall and Spring grant cycles. Applications for the fall cycle, which includes the [Boating Facilities Program](#), [Firearms and Archery Range Recreation](#), [Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities](#), and [Recreation Trails Program](#), are due October 31 and will be presented to the board for consideration in April 2025. The spring cycle, which includes the [Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account](#), [Boating Infrastructure Grant](#), [Community Forests Program](#), [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#), [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program](#), and [Youth Athletic Facilities](#) began in 2023 with outreach to applicants, applicants establishing planning eligibility, and RCO recruiting for the advisory committees.

For this cycle the board adopted a new State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP); changed the evaluation criteria for seven categories in four programs to reduce gaps in green space access, disparities in access to grant funds, and to align the criteria for multiple programs; addressed funding issues by adding cost increase policies to two programs, increased grant limits for one program, continued the non-state, non-federal match waiver for farms and forests; and added acquisition only projects to the Youth Athletic Facilities program. These changes involved RCO's policy,

communications, grant services, and PRISM teams. The recreation and conservation grants team worked to implement the changes.

In February 2024 staff held four application webinars and in April and May, policy specialists offered webinars on the criteria changes. Applicants submitted over 300 applications requesting a total of \$308 million. Advisory committees evaluated 281 of these projects, requesting \$295 million. Notably, fifty-four applicants took advantage of the board's match reduction policy.

Compared to the 2022 grant cycle, the 2024 grant cycle saw significant increases in applications to the Community Forests Program and Youth Athletic Facilities. The Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account and Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program also saw increases. As far as funding, the Community Forests Program, Youth Athletic Facilities, and Washington Wildlife and Recreation saw an increase in overall dollars requested.

This year, staff updated the conflict-of-interest policy, allowing members to recuse themselves from scoring projects submitted by their own agency or organization. Projects were evaluated using either virtual presentations or a written process.

Ms. Austin provided an overview of the fund allocation for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program and the local jurisdictional engagement process, which is further described in the [meeting materials](#). Following board approval of the preliminary ranked lists, they will be sent to the Governor by November 1. The Governor includes the lists and a funding request to the Legislature. The Legislature and Governor may not add projects to the list or reorder the lists; however, they may remove projects from the lists. If a project is removed from the list, the board does not have authority to fund it. When the Legislature approves the state capital budget, it approves the lists for the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account, Community Forests Program, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, and Youth Athletic Facilities.

The board will approve the final ranked lists and grant awards at the June 2025 meeting. Currently, staff are writing agreements for successful Community Outdoor Athletic Facilities sponsors, making site visits, and working with applicants to ensure they are ready for the grant awards in June.

Member Craig asked which programs had the greatest demand. Ms. Austin answered the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's Local Parks and Trails Categories have the highest demand, which is typical, while the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's habitat categories can be undersubscribed.

LUNCH: 11:58 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

**Item 7: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Outdoor Recreation
Account: Approval of Ranked Lists**

Ranked lists for the following categories can be found in the [meeting materials](#).

Local Parks

Rachelle Lim, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Outdoor Recreation – Local Parks](#) Category. Sponsors submitted sixty-four projects, totaling \$31.8 million in requested funds. Ms. Lim highlighted a project that tied for the top ranked project, Big Rock Park Acquisition ([RCO #24-1350](#)).

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-14**
Moved By: Member **Lam**
Seconded by: Member **Craig**
Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

State Lands Development and Renovation

Dan Haws, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Outdoor Recreation – State Lands Development and Renovation](#) category. This category is open only to the Washington Department of Natural Resources and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, who combined, submitted twelve applications totaling \$3.8 million in requested funding. Mr. Haws highlighted the Mount Si Trailhead ([RCO #24-1773](#)).

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-15**
Moved By: Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**
Seconded by: Member **Windrope**
Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

State Parks

Russell Malburg, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Outdoor Recreation – State Parks](#) category, available only to the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. Thirteen projects were submitted to the category totaling over \$15 million in requested funds. Mr. Malburg highlighted the top ranked project, Glen Tana Acquisition A ([RCO #24-1417](#)).

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-16**

Moved By: Member **Herzog**

Seconded by: Member **Windrope**

Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Trails

Jesse Sims, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Outdoor Recreation – Trails](#) category. Twelve projects were submitted to the category requesting a total of \$15.5 million. Mr. Sims highlighted the top ranked project, Fish Lake Trail Phase One ([RCO #24-1775](#)).

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-17**

Moved By: Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**

Seconded by: Member **Burgess**

Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Water Access

Butch Lovelace, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Outdoor Recreation – Water Access](#) category. Sponsors submitted twelve projects, requesting \$18.5 million. Mr. Lovelace highlighted the top ranked project, Yakima River Camp Access Acquisition ([RCO #24-1339](#)).

Public Comment

Megan Blunk commented on the importance of improving accessibility for those with disabilities as access to the outdoors and recreation opportunities improve mental health. Ms. Blunk expressed appreciation for projects like these making outdoor spaces better for everyone, specifically the DeMolay Sandspit Accessibility and Park Improvements ([RCO #24-1683](#)) that is ranked eighth on the list.

Motion: Move to Approve Resolution 2024-18

Moved By: Member **Craig**

Seconded by: Member **Bugert**

Decision: **Approved**

Item 8: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Habitat Conservation Account: Approval of Ranked Lists

Ranked lists for the following categories can be found in the [meeting materials](#).

Critical Habitat

Andrea Hood, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Habitat Conservation – Critical Habitat](#) category. There are eleven projects on the ranked list, requesting a total of \$25.5 million. Ms. Hood highlighted the top ranked project, Klickitat Oaks Phase Two ([RCO #24-1489](#)).

Motion: Move to Approve Resolution 2024-19

Moved By: Member **Lam**

Seconded by: Member **Windrope**

Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Natural Areas

Karen Edwards, assistant section manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Habitat Conservation – Natural Areas](#) category. All four projects submitted to this category were located throughout the Puget Sound and requested \$11.3 million. Ms. Edwards highlighted the top-ranked project, Woodard Bay Natural Resources Conservation Area Natural Areas 2024 ([RCO #24-1549](#)).

Motion: Move to Approve Resolution 2024-20

Moved By: Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**
Seconded by: Member **Herzog**
Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Riparian Protection

Member Burgess left the meeting at 1:58 p.m.

Kim Sellers, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Habitat Conservation – Riparian Protection](#) category. Sponsors submitted six projects, totaling \$7.7 million in requested funds. Ms. Sellers highlighted the top-ranked project, Frog’s Home Acquisition ([RCO #24-1951](#)).

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-21**
Moved By: Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**
Seconded by: Member **Bugert**
Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

State Lands Restoration and Enhancement

Brian Carpenter, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Habitat Conservation – State Lands Restoration and Enhancement](#) category. Sponsors submitted seventeen projects, totaling \$5.5 million in requested funds. Mr. Carpenter highlighted the top-ranked project, Washougal Oaks Natural Area Restoration Phase Four ([RCO #24-1812](#)).

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-22**
Moved By: Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**
Seconded by: Member **Craig**
Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Urban Wildlife Habitat

Karl Jacobs, assistant section manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Habitat Conservation – Urban Wildlife Habitat](#) category. Sponsors submitted eight projects, totaling \$17.99 million in requested funds. Mr. Jacobs highlighted the top-ranked project, Riverside State Park Glen Tana Acquisition B ([RCO #24-1779](#)).

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-23**

Moved By: Member **Bugert**

Seconded by: Member **Herzog**

Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Item 9: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Farm and Forest Account: Approval of Ranked Lists

Ranked lists for the following categories can be found in the [meeting materials](#).

Farmland Preservation

Kim Sellers provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Farm and Forest Account – Farmland Preservation](#) category. Sponsors submitted fifteen projects, totaling \$19 million in requested funds. Ms. Sellers highlighted the top-ranked project, Heifer Farm ([RCO #24-1691](#)).

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-24**

Moved By: Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**

Seconded by: Member **Herzog**

Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Forestland Preservation

Andrea Hood provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Farm and Forest Account – Forestland Preservation](#) category. There were two projects submitted to this category, both in Whatcom County, requesting

\$954,500 in funds. Ms. Hood highlighted both projects, Maple Falls Forest ([RCO #24-1983](#)) and the top-ranked project, Canyon Creek Forest ([RCO #24-1886](#)).

Member Bugert noted the county is acquiring the easements and retiring over forty development rights and asked if the county is looking into a transfer of development rights to encourage development where development is wanted. Ms. Hood was not sure how this project pairs with the transfer of development rights program, but the strategy is to buffer commercial forests with residential areas. **Marguerite Austin** noted that a transfer of development rights would not be an allowable activity in this program; however, the development rights are being purchased and extinguished.

Motion: Move to Approve **Resolution 2024-25**

Moved By: Member **Lam**

Seconded by: Member **Windrope**

Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

BREAK: 2:45 P.M. – 2:56 P.M.

Item 10: Community Forests Program: Approval of Ranked Lists

Ranked lists for this category can be found in the [meeting materials](#).

Karen Edwards provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Community Forests Program, which is an office program](#). Sponsors submitted thirteen projects to this category, requesting a total of \$34.1 million. Ms. Edwards highlighted the top-ranked project, Mount Adams Community Forest: Klickitat Rim Phase Two ([RCO #24-1993](#)).

Marguerite Austin noted there were five community forest applications that were submitted in the last grant round. Two projects on that list were not funded by the Legislature and those applicants re-applied in this grant round. Additionally, the 2024 supplemental budget provided funding for these two projects through the Climate Commitment Act. If Climate Commitment Act funding continues these projects will be funded by the supplemental budget causing an overall reduction in the funds requested.

Member Craig asked if there was any idea of how the Legislature would fund this program or if these funds are a line item in the budget. **Director Duffy** answered that

this is an individual request from the agency to the Legislature who will decide how much funding will be provided.

Motion: Move to Approve Resolution 2024-26
Moved By: Member **Ohlson-Kiehn**
Seconded by: Member **Bugert**
Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Item 11: Youth Athletic Facilities: Approval of Ranked Lists

Member Burgess returned to the meeting at 3:12 p.m.

Ranked lists for this category can be found in the [meeting materials](#).

Lan Nicolai, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of the ranked lists in the [Youth Athletic Facilities](#) program. Forty-four projects were submitted to the Large Grants category, requesting a total of \$42 million and eight projects, requesting \$1.9 million, were submitted to the Small Grants category. Ms. Nicolai highlighted the top-ranked project in the Large Grants category, Memorial Field Infrastructure Replacement ([RCO #24-1768](#)) and the top-ranked project in the Small Grants category, Othello Kiwanis Park Basketball Court ([RCO #24-1427](#)).

Motion: Move to Approve Resolution 2024-27
Moved By: Member **Windrope**
Seconded by: Member **Burgess**
Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Item 12: Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account: Approval of Ranked List

Ranked lists for this category can be found in the [meeting materials](#).

Karl Jacobs, assistant section manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account](#). Fifteen projects were submitted to this category, requesting a total of \$7.8 million. Mr. Jacobs highlighted the top-ranked project, Frog's Home Acquisition ([RCO #24-1951](#)).

Member Bugert asked where the matching funds came from. Mr. Jacobs was unsure but noted it is a common program that matches with Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – Water Access category and federal funding sources.

Motion: Move to Approve Resolution 2024-28

Moved By: Member **Lam**

Seconded by: Member **Craig**

Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Item 13: Land and Water Conservation Fund: Approval of Final Ranked List and Delegation Authority for Awarding Grants for 2025-2027

Ranked lists for this category can be found in the [meeting materials](#).

Henry Smith, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of the ranked list in the [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) program. Twenty-five development projects were submitted to this category, requesting a total of \$36.3 million. Mr. Smith highlighted the top-ranked project, Cloney Park Inclusive Playground ([RCO #24-1793](#)).

Member Craig asked with \$36 million in requests and only \$7 million to allocate, if staff were assisting other applicants that were not funded but may be funded through the National Parks Service’s Land and Water Conservation Fund – Legacy program. Mr. Smith answered that some staff are attending a webinar on the Land and Water Conservation Fund – Legacy and applicants who have met the criteria for this fund have been contacted. Mr. Smith noted the \$7 million is for one fiscal year allocation, and the ranked list is for two. The second year of funding is currently unknown.

Motion: Move to Approve Resolution 2024-29

Moved By: Member **Bugert**

Seconded by: Member **Herzog**

Decision: **Approved**

Public Comment

None.

Item 14: State Agency Partner Reports

Partner reports were provided after Item 6.

Department of Natural Resources

Member Kristen Ohlson-Kiehn explained that the Department of Natural Resources is taking a conservative approach to the 2025 budget requests in anticipation of a lean budget year. The Department of Natural Resources has one maintenance operating request for \$637,000 in carry forward funding from a 2023 Protect Public Lands and Tribal Rights funding request; \$8 million operating request to purchase time from Washington Conservation Corps and partners to provide essential field capacity for recreation and natural areas management; a capital request for \$7.8 million to fund forty-three projects statewide through the Safe and Sustainable Recreation program; and a \$5.8 million capital request for the Natural Areas Facilities Preservation and Access program to fund thirty-eight projects statewide.

The Department of Natural Resources submitted ten proposals to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – State Lands Restoration category, four proposals to Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – State Lands Development category and is preparing to submit twenty-five applications to the Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities program and Recreational Trails Program.

A thirty-day open public comment period opened on October 21 on the Outdoor Access and Responsible Recreation strategic planning process with virtual public meetings on October 29 and 30.

Funding from the Legislature in 2024 is being used to hire two new positions to support target shooting management statewide. Later in the fall an Environmental Engineer III will be hired to support lead mitigation efforts in collaboration with Washington State Department of Ecology to clean up gravel pits listed as toxic clean-up sites and public engagement for this program is expected to begin in early 2025.

Finally, the Youth Outreach and Education program officially joined the division and provides career connected outdoor learning opportunities for Washington youth on state lands.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Member Amy Windrope shared that the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife will be requesting \$10 million to invest in land stewardship, \$6 million of which would be for urgent, high-impact needs, \$2 million to implement the recreation strategy, and \$2 million for the Tribal-State recreational impacts initiative work.

Member Windrope noted Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife undertook rulemaking under the proliferation of unauthorized trails on Washington Department of

Fish and Wildlife lands. A Washington Administrative Code was drafted to limit the development of informal roads and trails on agency managed lands. A public hearing was held in September and the final rule is expected to be released by the end of October. The rule will give Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife law enforcement tools to discourage the creation of new roads and trails which can pose a threat to natural and cultural resources and create safety hazards for users.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife hired a consultant to inventory all motorized and non-motorized recreational trails. To keep people safe on agency lands, a pilot ambassador program was created which is in its second year. The ambassadors work with volunteers with two non-profit partners, Mountain to Sound Greenway and Methow Valley Trails Collaborative, in five locations from June to September.

Member Windrope emphasized the importance of agency water access sites throughout the state. These sites are heavily used and require maintenance. The Water Access Management Plan is focusing on the North Puget Sound, or Region Four, which covers water access from Seattle to the Canadian border. The area has ninety-eight boat launches, seventy miles of public fishing easements, and sixteen hatcheries.

Lastly, Member Windrope noted that before the agency applies to RCO, it goes through an internal process to vet projects called the Lands 2020 Project. Public comments will open on October 30 on internal proposals.

State Parks and Recreation Commission

Member Peter Herzog noted that Washington State Parks provides updates on projects to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition. Washington State Parks usually receives around \$15 million depending on the funding level from Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, and another \$3-4 million from other funding sources each year. Currently there are twelve grant-funded projects underway in various states of completion. Recently, the Sunset Beach redevelopment project at Lake Sammamish was completed, which cost \$5 million, and half was funded by the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. Additionally, work to relocate a campground that regularly flooded at Dosewallips State Park was recently completed.

Work on the Cross-State Trails has continued including the Willapa Hills State Park Trails which redecked three to four railroad bridges, making them accessible to foot, bike, and horse traffic.

The Washington State Parks' real estate team has purchased several impactful properties in the past calendar year including seven properties totaling 163 acres for

\$5.5 million. The Inholdings Grant typically asks for \$1.5 million per biennium to purchase smaller, opportunistic pieces of property as it becomes available, and two properties were purchased in the past year.

Cama Beach State Park continues to have issues with flooding and utilities and the cabins remain closed. The agency is beginning the process to determine the future of the cabins at the park as it is a sensitive site that is also a national registered archaeological site, national registered historic site, and has Native American burial sites. Visit the [Cama Beach Project](#) website to learn more.

Due to budgetary restraints, Washington State Parks has stopped services at fourteen motorized snow parks throughout the state after the rigorous process of determining which snow parks could be closed without disrupting access to the vast network of motorized and groomed trail opportunities. The snowmobile program is funded entirely by snowmobile registrations and fuel tax. Washington State Parks will need to decide if the system can be maintained or if it will need to be scaled back and is looking at working with Legislature to increase the registration fee.

Governor's Office

Jon Snyder provided his partner report after Item 13.

Jon Snyder shared the Governor's office is putting together seven different budgets based on election results. The capital budget is tight due to a plan for broadband match from the federal government and new investments in affordable housing.

Following the election there will be a new governor and this will be Mr. Snyder's final report to the board. He expressed appreciation for working with RCO and the board to keep recreation and conservation of bipartisan space and recognized Washington as a leader in funding.

Mr. Snyder will be working with the administration transition team through January 15.

ADJOURN: 3:52 PM

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Decision Memo

APPROVED BY RCO DIRECTOR MEGAN DUFFY

Meeting Date: January 29, 2025

Title: Time Extension Requests

Prepared By: Recreation and Conservation Outdoor Grants Managers

Summary

This is a request for the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to consider the proposed project time extensions listed in Attachment A.

Board Action Requested

This item will be a:

- Request for Decision
- Request for Direction
- Briefing

Resolution: 2025-01 (Consent Agenda)

Purpose of Resolution: Approve the requested time extensions.

Background

Each grant [program policy manual](#) outlines the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board's adopted policy for progress on active funded projects. The key policy elements are the sponsor's responsibility to complete a funded project promptly and meet the milestones outlined in the grant agreement. The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) director may give an applicant up to four years from the award date to complete a project. Extensions beyond four years require board action.

RCO received requests for time extensions for the projects listed in Attachment A. This document summarizes the circumstances for the requested extensions and the expected date of project completion.

General considerations for approving time extension requests include:

- Receipt of a written request for the time extension,
- Reimbursements requested and approved,
- Date the board granted funding approval,
- Conditions surrounding the delay,
- Sponsor's reasons or justification for requesting the extension,

- Likelihood of sponsor completing the project within the extended period,
- Original dates for project completion,
- Status of activities within the grant, and
- Sponsor’s progress on this and other funded projects.

Strategic Plan Link

Consideration of these requests supports the board’s goal of helping its partners protect, restore, and develop habitat, working lands, and recreation opportunities that benefit people, fish and wildlife, and ecosystems.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the time extension requests for the projects listed in Attachment A.

Attachment

A. Time Extension Requests for Board Approval

Time Extension Requests for Board Approval

Department of Natural Resources

Project number and type	Project name	Grant program	Grant funds remaining	Current end date	Extension request
20-1613 Restoration	Kennedy Creek Floodplain Forest Restoration	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: State Lands Restoration	\$46,053 24%	02/28/2025	02/28/2026

Reasons for Delay and Justification of Request

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will use this grant to restore and enhance floodplain and forest habitat through native tree planting on ninety acres and weed control on 121 acres in the Kennedy Creek Natural Area. To date, DNR has restored approximately 200 acres.

DNR is requesting another year to complete the planting and one full season of irrigation on the remaining eleven acres that they were unable to plant last year. The planting plan is completed, and the spring planting will be followed by a season of irrigation and weed control to increase the chance of plant survival.

The delay was due to the additional time needed for stakeholder input. All concerns have been addressed and the remaining project is ready for implementation. DNR has been working closely with the Squaxin Island Tribe on the planting plan. It took more time to meet on site with tribal representatives, but DNR was able to include the Tribe's input on types of plants and locations in the final plan. They are also working with the Tribe on the possibility of engaging tribal youth in the restoration process.

King County

Project number and type	Project name	Grant program	Grant funds remaining	Current end date	Extension request
16-1362 Development	Foothills Trail Development 252nd Avenue -Mud Mountain Road	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Trails	\$1,595,262 (57%)	03/31/2025	05/31/2025

Reasons for Delay and Justification of Request

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks received a grant to construct 0.9 miles of the Foothills Regional Trail, including renovation of the existing historic bridge over Boise Creek. This trail segment is the final piece to complete over twenty miles of continuous trail, connecting the communities of Puyallup, McMillin, Orting, South Prairie, Buckley, and Enumclaw.

Construction is substantially complete, and the trail was opened to the public in September 2024. King County will finish the mitigation planting by the end of February 2025. After the planting is complete, the only remaining project activity is cultural resources reporting on two Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation permits. King County recently extended the cultural resources consultant's contract to May 31, 2025, to allow more time to complete this complex reporting. The County is requesting a corresponding time extension through May 31, 2025, to bill the grant for the full scope of cultural resources expenses.

Port of Port Townsend

Project number and type	Project name	Grant program	Grant funds remaining	Current end date	Extension request
20-2083 Development	Gardiner Boat Launch Improvement	Boating Facilities Program: Local	\$404,045 75%	04/30/2025	04/30/2026

Reasons for Delay and Justification of Request

The Port of Port Townsend received grant funds for development of a new accessible concrete launch ramp and a seasonally accessible boarding float at the Gardiner Boat Launch, located on Discovery Bay in Jefferson County.

When the project's Hydraulic Project Approval permit was issued by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife it was noted that the project location is on a documented spawning beach for the Pacific Sand Lance, a Species of Greatest Conservation Need under the State Wildlife Action Plan. The traditional spawning season of this species is mid-October through February. Unfortunately, the permit was issued too late to avoid the 2024-2025 spawning season.

The Port of Port Townsend is requesting an extension that will align the project's development timeline with the next in-water work window of July through February. However, the sponsor plans to begin construction late this summer and complete the work prior to the 2025-2026 Pacific Sand Lance spawning season.

The Port is requesting a twelve-month extension to provide time for construction and project closeout.

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Decision Memo

APPROVED BY RCO DIRECTOR MEGAN DUFFY

Meeting Date: January 29, 2025

Title: Request to Waive the Boating Facilities Program Multisite Cost Limit: Department of Fish and Wildlife, ADA Parking and Restroom Replacement, 24-2523

Prepared By: Dan Haws, Outdoor Grants Manager

Summary

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board policy allows an applicant to apply for a Boating Facilities Program grant covering multiple sites for no more than \$50,000 per site. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is asking the board to waive the maximum per worksite cost for the Americans with Disabilities Act Parking and Restroom Replacement ([24-2523](#)) project due to escalating construction costs.

Board Action Requested

This item will be a:

- Request for Decision
- Request for Direction
- Briefing

Resolution: 2025-01 (Consent Agenda)

Purpose of Resolution: Approve a waiver of the multisite grant limit for the above-referenced restroom replacement project.

Background

The Boating Facilities Program provides grants to acquire, develop, or renovate motorized boating access sites and facilities on fresh and saltwater. Recreation and Conservation Funding Board policies for this program are outlined in [Manual 9: Boating Facilities Program](#). Board policy limits funding requests for a multi-site boating project to \$50,000 per worksite. Multi-site projects must comply with several other eligibility policies, including the following:

- All work types, which means the specific work proposed for the project, across all worksites must be of the same type (for example, boat launch development, dredging, installing boarding floats, etc.).
- All worksites and work types must be either saltwater or freshwater oriented, no combinations of saltwater and freshwater sites in the same project.
- All work types must meet the Office of Financial Management’s capital project criteria, defined in the biennial publication *Washington State Capital Plan Instructions*.
- All worksites must be in no more than two adjacent counties.
- Each worksite’s location must be available and accessible to Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff for inspections.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) submitted four Boating Facilities Program grant applications this grant cycle; one for a multisite project. The project scope is to replace old, outdated, non-compliant restrooms with new accessible restrooms and provide accessible parking and access routes in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The improvements are for the following six access areas on four waterbodies in Grant County:

- Evergreen Reservoir North
- Evergreen Reservoir Southwest
- Evergreen Reservoir West
- Heart Lake
- Lind Coulee Island
- Windmill Lake

WDFW estimates the construction cost of each worksite at approximately \$110,000, exceeding the \$50,000 per worksite grant limit. WDFW notified RCO staff and asked if the board would consider increasing the limit to address escalating construction costs. RCO staff advised them to submit the grant application and bring it forward through technical review, pending board review of their waiver request.

Analysis

When the board adopted the multi-site development policy for boating projects in 1994, it set a grant limit of \$50,000 for individual worksites, which was reasonable given construction costs at that time. While reviewing applications this year, staff recognized that funding requests have increased over the last several grant cycles in response to escalating construction, permitting, and mitigation costs. This was confirmed by WDFW, other applicants, and the Boating Programs Advisory Committee.

Recently, WDFW has prioritized creating boating access facilities that meet current accessibility standards. In addition to replacing restrooms, the agency must consider parking and access routes. WDFW does not want to compromise their accessible designs, and board policy requires applicants to build facilities that meet or exceed current accessibility standards.

Alternatives Considered

When reviewing this request, the following alternatives were considered:

Option One. Ask the board to waive the worksite grant limit, allowing the project to proceed as proposed. The cap on multisite development costs has not kept up with inflation or increased construction costs. This makes it hard to complete the minimum upgrades required to install new single-vault, concrete restrooms that meet current accessibility standards and provide graffiti resistant coating that reduces maintenance costs.

Option Two. Break the proposal into separate grant applications for each worksite. While possible, the grant application preparation work and presentation materials would be costly. Individual applications mean more work for the applicant, Recreation and Conservation Office(RCO) staff, and the Boating Programs Advisory Committee as it would result in the creation, review, and evaluation of separate grant proposals.

Option Three. Break the proposal into two separate multi-site applications for each work type one for the installation of the restrooms and one for upgrading the parking and access routes. The key challenge with this option is not knowing how the two projects would score and rank. If they do not score and rank within funding range, this could ultimately result in the development facilities that would not meet current accessibility standards. Additionally, this would require more work for the applicant, RCO staff and the advisory committee.

Option Four. Do nothing. The WDFW determined that this was not a viable option. WDFW has a long-term lease agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation, allowing the agency to develop, renovate, operate, and manage public recreation access sites and facilities on federal land. A recent audit and review of some sites revealed that they were out of compliance with the terms of the lease agreement because the facilities have reached the end of their useful life and are not designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

After considering the options, WDFW decided to ask RCO staff to move forward with the first option, asking the board to waive the multi-site grant limit and allow submittal of the project as proposed.

Strategic Plan Link

Consideration of this proposal supports the board's strategy to provide funding to protect, preserve, restore, and enhance recreation opportunities statewide.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the board approve the request and waive the multisite cost limit for the Americans with Disabilities Act Parking and Restroom Replacement ([24-2523](#)) project.



Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Briefing Memo

APPROVED BY RCO DIRECTOR MEGAN DUFFY

Meeting Date: January 29, 2025

Title: Advisor Recognition

Prepared By: Tessa Cencula, Grant Coordination Specialist

Summary

This memo summarizes the years of service by advisors on the advisory committees the Recreation and Conservation Office uses to assist in its grant programs.

Board Action Requested

This item will be a:

- Request for Decision
- Request for Direction
- Briefing

Resolution: 2025-01

Purpose of Resolution: Approve the proposed recognitions.

Background

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) relies on advisors to help administer its grant programs. Advisors provide a strategic balance and perspective on program issues. Their activities, experience, and knowledge help shape program policies that guide RCO in reviewing and evaluating projects and administering grants. The following individuals have completed their service after providing valuable analysis and excellent program advice. Outdoor recreationists in Washington will enjoy the results of their hard work and vision for years to come. Staff applaud the advisor's exceptional service and recommends approval of the attached resolution via Resolution 2025-01 (consent).

Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Advisory Committee

Name	Position	Years
Jenny Bull	Community Member Representative	7

Land and Water Conservation Fund Advisory Committee

Name	Position	Years
Kevin Killeen	Community Member Representative	8

Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Advisory Committee

Name	Position	Years
Nancy Toenyan	Off-Road Vehicle - Motorcycle Representative	8

Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Trails Advisory Committee

Name	Position	Years
James Eychaner	Community Member Representative	1

Attachments

- A. Individual Service Recognition



A Resolution to Recognize the Service of

Jenny Bull

To the Residents of Washington State and the Recreation and Conservation
Funding Board

WHEREAS from 2018 to 2024, Jenny Bull served the citizens of the state of Washington and the Recreation and Conservation Office by participating on the Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS the result of this service was the provision of valuable analysis and excellent advice that assisted in the development of exemplary program policies, program planning, and the evaluation of recreation projects for funding; and

WHEREAS members of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board wish to recognize this support and service;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that in recognition of Ms. Bull's dedication and excellence in performing these services, the board and its staff extend their sincere appreciation and compliments on a job well done; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent along with a letter of appreciation to Ms. Bull.

Approved by the Recreation and
Conservation Funding Board in Olympia,
Washington
on January 29, 2025

Chair Michael Shiosaki



A Resolution to Recognize the Service of

Kevin Killeen

To the Residents of Washington State and the Recreation and Conservation
Funding Board

WHEREAS from 2017 to 2024, Kevin Killeen served the citizens of the state of Washington and the Recreation and Conservation Office by participating on the Land and Water Conservation Fund Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS the result of this service was the provision of valuable analysis and excellent advice that assisted in the development of exemplary program policies, program planning, and the evaluation of recreation projects for funding; and

WHEREAS members of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board wish to recognize this support and service;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that in recognition of Mr. Killeen's dedication and excellence in performing these services, the board and its staff extend their sincere appreciation and compliments on a job well done; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent along with a letter of appreciation to Mr. Killeen.

Approved by the Recreation and
Conservation Funding Board in Olympia,
Washington
on January 29, 2025

Chair Michael Shiosaki



A Resolution to Recognize the Service of

Nancy Toenyan

To the Residents of Washington State and the Recreation and Conservation
Funding Board

WHEREAS from 2017 to 2024, Nancy Toenyan served the citizens of the state of Washington and the Recreation and Conservation Office by participating on the Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS the result of this service was the provision of valuable analysis and excellent advice that assisted in the development of exemplary program policies, program planning, and the evaluation of recreation projects for funding; and

WHEREAS members of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board wish to recognize this support and service;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that in recognition of Ms. Toenyan's dedication and excellence in performing these services, the board and its staff extend their sincere appreciation and compliments on a job well done; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent along with a letter of appreciation to Ms. Toenyan.

Approved by the Recreation and
Conservation Funding Board in Olympia,
Washington
on January 29, 2025

Chair Michael Shiosaki



A Resolution to Recognize the Service of

James Eychaner

To the Residents of Washington State and the Recreation and Conservation
Funding Board

WHEREAS throughout 2024, James Eychaner served the citizens of the state of Washington and the Recreation and Conservation Office by participating on the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Trails Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS the result of this service was the provision of valuable analysis and excellent advice that assisted in the development of exemplary program policies, program planning, and the evaluation of recreation projects for funding; and

WHEREAS members of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board wish to recognize this support and service;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that in recognition of Mr. Eychaner's dedication and excellence in performing these services, the board and its staff extend their sincere appreciation and compliments on a job well done; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent along with a letter of appreciation to Mr. Eychaner.

Approved by the Recreation and
Conservation Funding Board in Olympia,
Washington
on January 29, 2025

Chair Michael Shiosaki

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
Resolution 2025-01
January 29, 2025 - Consent Agenda

BE IT RESOLVED, that the following January 29, 2025 Consent Agenda items are approved:

- A. Board Meeting Minutes
 - October 29-30, 2024
- B. Time Extensions
 - Department of Natural Resources, Kennedy Creek Floodplain Forest Restoration, 20-1613
 - King County, Foothills Trail Development 252nd Ave-Mud Mountain Road, 16-1362
 - Port of Port Townsend, Gardiner Boat Launch Improvement, 20-2083
- C. Waiver Request
 - Request to Waive the Boating Facilities Program Multisite Cost Limit: Department of Fish and Wildlife, ADA Parking and Restroom Replacement, 24-2523
- D. Advisor Recognition (4)

Resolution moved by: _____

Resolution seconded by: _____

Adopted/Defeated/Deferred (underline one)

Approved Date: January 29, 2025

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Briefing Memo

APPROVED BY RCO DIRECTOR MEGAN DUFFY

Meeting Date: January 29, 2025

Title: Recreation and Conservation Office Report

Prepared By: Megan Duffy, Marguerite Austin, Kyle Guzlas, Brock Milliern, Mark Jarasitis, Bart Lynch, and Susan Zemek

Summary

This memo summarizes key agency activities.

Board Action Requested

This item will be a:

- Request for Decision
- Request for Direction
- Briefing

Agency Updates

Record Level of Interest in the No Child Left Inside Grant Program

A record 261 applications were received during the No Child Left Inside grant round that closed in October. More than \$21 million in assistance was requested.

This eclipses the previous record set in the past biennium with 174 applications requesting more than \$12 million. These grants provide funding to improve the overall academic performance, self-esteem, health, and connection to nature for youth and to empower



local communities to engage youth in outdoor education and recreation experiences. Typical activities include environmental education, leadership development, outdoor recreation and adventure, stewardship activities, and camp programs.

This year, the grant program was given heightened attention because it was included in the [Wilderness Society's "Nature Awaits" campaign](#), which spotlights nature-based outdoor programs across the nation that are helping get youth outdoors by reducing barriers to access. Applications will be evaluated by the advisory committee between January and March 2025. In March, the ranked lists of projects will be presented to the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission director for preliminary approval.

\$42 Million Requested in Fall Grant Round

The second round of recreation and conservation grant applications, which focuses on trails, shooting ranges, and boating access, closed October 31. There were 172 grant applications received, requesting \$42 million. These grants include the Boating Facilities Program, Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Program, Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities, and the Recreational Trails Program. Applications underwent technical reviews in November, which will be followed by evaluations in February and March.



Employee News



Myra Barker will be retiring January 31 after twenty-five years at the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), most recently as the manager of the Compliance Unit in the Grant Services Section. Previously, Myra was a grants manager in the Recreation and Conservation Grants Section. Congrats Myra; you will be missed!



Blake Brady, administrative assistant for the Grant Services Section, has taken a position at King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks.



Deena Resnick, administrative assistant for the Salmon Grants Section, moved on to a new role at the Department of Ecology.



Hailee Taylor joined RCO in December as an administrative assistant for the Grant Services Section. Hailee spent the past seven years as a lead medical assistant doing all things necessary to keep the front and the back of a medical clinic functioning smoothly. She grew up in Thurston County and lives in Rochester just south of Olympia with her husband and fifteen-month-old child.



Mollie Lavelle joined RCO in December as an administrative assistant in the Salmon Grants Section. Mollie worked for several years as a kindergarten teacher and then pivoted to a role at an educational literacy company in Colorado. She earned her bachelor of arts degree from Saint Mary's College in South Bend, Indiana, and her master of education degree from Regis University in Denver, Colorado. She enjoys hiking, camping, and kayaking. Her husband and two dogs join her on her adventures.

News from the Boards

The **Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group** met in November to discuss land transactions targeted for 2025.

The **Washington Invasive Species Council** met in September and December. The council heard briefings on the European green crab long-term management plan, emerald ash borer preparedness efforts, chronic wasting disease detection, poison hemlock control in King County, and the Safeguard our Shellfish campaign. The council heard year-end reports on the effort to provide boot brushes to protect sagebrush and boat inspections to guard against quagga and zebra mussel. The council also looked to the future and brainstormed ideas for Invasive Species Awareness Week in 2025, elected a new chair, and begin planning for updating the council's strategic plan. Finally, the council celebrated eradication of the northern giant hornet in Whatcom County and hosted a ceremony to recognize invasive species heroes.

The **Salmon Recovery Funding Board** met in December and heard briefings on the biennial workplan for implementing the statewide salmon recovery strategy, the Intensively Monitored Watershed Program, and the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program. The board also reviewed the manual for its monitoring program and discussed different approaches for a riparian protection grant program.

Policy and Legislative Update

Staff will provide updates to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board on the legislative session. This will include an overview of the budget, summary of next steps for the budget process, the Outdoor Recreation Caucus, and any recreation, conservation or related bills that impacts the work of the board or agency.

Staff will also provide information on RCO's efforts to update the Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State. Previous iterations of the report were released in 2015 and 2020. The 2025 update is set to be completed mid-year.

Grant Management Section

Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership

RCO will be accepting applications for the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program starting in January 2025. Applicants may request up to \$15 million for acquisition or development of an outdoor recreation area. Congress created this nationally competitive grant program in 2014 to support urban parks in underserved communities. It is funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund to increase access to the outdoors for disadvantaged communities.

The National Park Service expanded the eligibility criteria this year to include communities with a population of 25,000 or more. To be eligible, the project must be located within a designated underserved area. Underserved status can be demonstrated through use of the Council on Environmental Quality's [Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool](#), the Environmental Protection Agency's [EJ Screen Tool](#), or documentation submitted by the community describing the demographic and environmental factors that indicate the community's status of need.

Applications are due in March and will be submitted for the national competition in June. The National Park Service plans to award grants in September 2025 and February 2026. The City of Seattle received a \$960,430 grant in 2022 for development of a new one-acre park in the Rainier Valley.



Play structure in Seattle's North Rainier Land Banked Park

Successful Applicant Webinar for Federal Grantees

RCO staff hosted a Successful Applicant Webinar in December for seven organizations poised to receive grants for Land and Water Conservation Fund projects submitted in 2024. DeAnn Beck, Hayley Dalgetty, Henry Smith, and Rachelle Lim put together a sixty-minute session, sharing information about the materials needed to secure federal funds and outlined the process for getting projects underway.

The board approved the final ranked list of projects and delegated authority to RCO's Director to award grants pending receipt of grant agreements from the National Park Service. Combined with the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership grant approved for the City of Kent, the Director will award over \$16 million to these successful applicants.



*Olympia's Woodruff Park
Pickleball Courts*

Port Association Conference

Karen Edwards shared the good news about grants available for ports that provide recreational access for the public at the Washington Public Ports Association Conference's committee meeting on December 11. Karen focused on the federal Boating Infrastructure Grant and Boating Facilities Program that support development of facilities for motorized boating. Key concerns were the increased cost of projects and the new mitigation requirements. Following the presentation, attendees were invited to meet with Karen and other funders to discuss establishing eligibility for various grants. RCO will offer grants for boating infrastructure projects in 2025.

Project Administration

Staff administer outdoor recreation, habitat conservation, working lands, and education projects as summarized in the table below. Active projects are under agreement and in the implementation phase. Board-approved and director-approved projects include grant awards made by the board or RCO director after receiving board-delegated authority to award grants. Staff are working with sponsors to secure the materials needed to place approved projects under agreement.

Program	Active Projects	Board and Director Approved Projects	Total Funded Projects
Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA)	20	0	20
Boating Facilities Program (BFP)	47	0	47
Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG)	5	0	5
Community Forests Program (CFP)	7	2	9
Community Outdoor Athletic Facilities (COAF)	0	15	15
Firearms and Archery Range Recreation (FARR)	7	0	7
Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)	40	0	40
Local Parks Maintenance (LPM)	27	1	28
No Child Left Inside (NCLI)	95	0	95
Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities (NOVA)	90	0	90
Outdoor Learning Grants (OLG)	27	0	27
Planning for Recreation Access (PRA)	36	0	36
Recreation & Conservation Office Recreation Grants (RRG)	4	0	4
Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	37	0	37
Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)	203	3	206
Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF)	35	2	37
Total	680	23	703

Viewing Closed Projects

Attachment A lists projects that closed between October 1 and December 31, 2024. The recreation and conservation grants team closed thirty-seven projects. Select the project number to view the project description, grant funds awarded, photos, maps, reports, etc.

Grant Services Section

Advisory Committees

Last spring and summer, 137 advisory committee members on twelve advisory committees participated in grant technical review and evaluation. The time and expertise they shared improved project applications and brought the top projects to

light. Advisors spent 2,240 hours in virtual review and evaluation meetings, and countless hours of written review and evaluation work.

RCO continued to offer stipends to advisors. Fifty-one advisors received stipends to help offset the costs of committee participation. RCO will continue to assess and adapt the advisory committee stipend program to help make advisory committee service accessible.

RCO implemented an updated conflict of interest policy, giving advisors the option of participating in scoring applications while recusing themselves from scoring individual projects, with which they may have a conflict. As part of the training related to this policy, advisors viewed a newly created [bias awareness training](#), developed for advisory committees by RCO's Equity Coordinator.

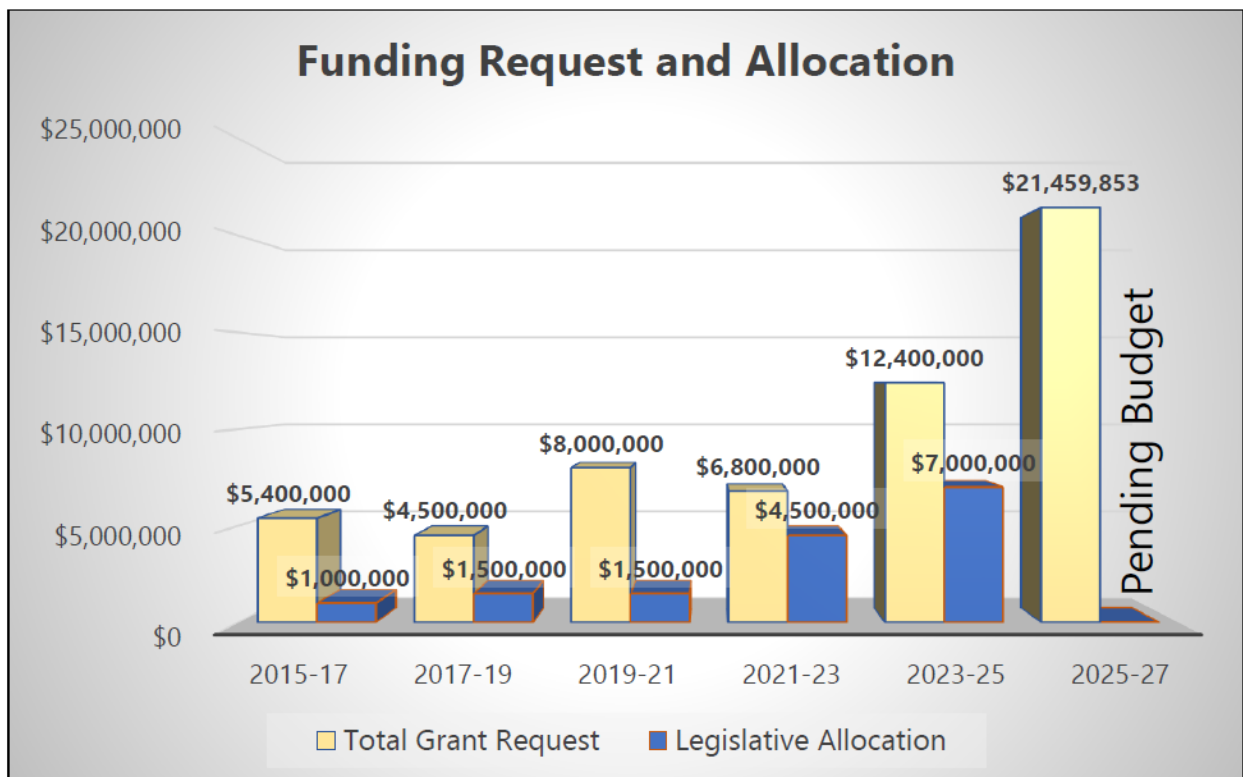
Also new this year, advisors participated in a general committee training prior to committee-specific introductions. This training provided general background about RCO's processes for all advisors and allowed more time for program-specific discussions during individual committee introductions. It was developed in response to survey feedback from the previous grant round.

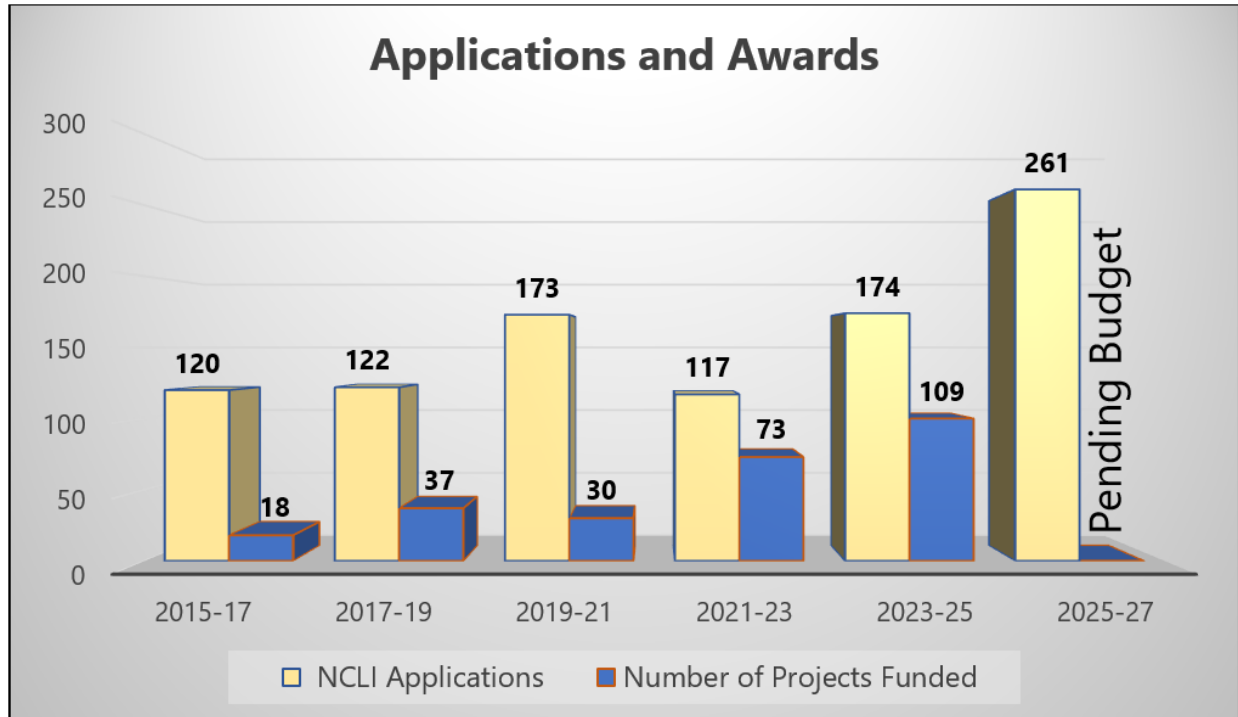
Finally, the advisory committees were guided by revised charters. These new charters aim to ensure the committees include a variety of perspectives and that enough committee seats are filled to accommodate potential recusals. The effects of both the conflict of interest policy, new trainings, and the updated charters will be assessed after future grant rounds.

No Child Left Inside

The grant application funding request for 2024 is the largest in the history of the program with 261 applications requesting a total of \$21,459,853 in grant assistance.

Funding Tier	Number of Applications	Grant Request	Sponsor Match	Total
1	59	\$1,390,892	No Match Required	\$1,390,892
2	112	\$7,639,441	No Match Required	\$7,639,441
3	90	\$12,429,520	\$7,983,828	\$12,429,520
Total	261	\$21,459,853	\$7,983,828	\$29,443,681





Fiscal Report

For July 1, 2023-June 30, 2025, actuals through December 30, 2024 (Fiscal Month 18). Percentage of biennium reported: 75.0 percent. The "Budget" column shows the state appropriations and any received federal awards.

Grant Program	BUDGET	COMMITTED		TO BE COMMITTED		EXPENDITURES	
	Includes Re-appropriations 2023-2025	Dollars	% of Budget	Dollars	% of Budget	Dollars	% Expended of Committed
Grant Programs							
ALEA	\$18,419,570	\$15,110,669	82%	\$3,308,901	18%	\$4,164,351	28%
BFP	\$38,408,800	\$35,243,841	92%	\$3,164,959	8%	\$6,920,883	20%
BIG	\$7,368,760	\$7,368,760	100%	\$0	0%	\$893,129	12%
FARR	\$1,188,923	\$1,188,923	100%	\$0	0%	\$504,338	42%
LWCF	\$41,238,500	\$41,238,500	100%	\$0	0%	\$6,901,924	17%
NOVA	\$23,161,190	\$20,660,770	89%	\$2,500,420	11%	\$4,969,075	24%
RTP	\$10,692,100	\$9,501,853	89%	\$1,190,247	11%	\$1,800,479	19%
WWRP	\$251,290,070	\$235,344,648	94%	\$15,945,422	6%	\$41,651,262	18%
RRG	\$5,514,230	\$5,216,184	95%	\$298,046	5%	\$1,544,535	30%
YAF	\$35,630,470	\$30,641,788	86%	\$4,988,682	14%	\$6,594,340	22%
Subtotal	\$432,912,613	\$401,515,936	93%	\$31,396,677	7%	\$75,944,316	19%
Administration							

General Operating Funds	\$13,053,797	\$13,053,797	100%	\$0	0%	\$8,173,397	63%
Grand Total	\$445,966,410	\$414,569,733	93%	\$31,396,677	7%	\$84,117,713	20%

Acronym	Grant Program
ALEA	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
BFP	Boating Facilities Program
BIG	Boating Infrastructure Grant
FARR	Firearms and Archery Range Recreation
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
NOVA	Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities
RTP	Recreational Trails Program
WWRP	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program
RRG	RCO Recreation Grants
YAF	Youth Athletic Facilities

Board Revenue Report

For July 1, 2023-June 30, 2025, actuals through July 31, 2024 (Fiscal Month 13).
Percentage of biennium reported: 54.2 percent

Program	Biennial Forecast		Collections
	Estimate	Actual	% of Estimate
Boating Facilities Program (BFP)	\$17,786,500	\$12,260,660	68.9%
Nonhighway, Off-Road Vehicle Program (NOVA)	\$13,434,635	\$9,311,859	69.3%
Firearms and Archery Range Rec Program (FARR)	\$629,852	\$405,133	64.3%
Total	\$31,850,987	\$21,977,652	69.0%

Revenue Notes:

- BFP revenue is from the un-refunded marine gasoline taxes.
- NOVA revenue is from the motor vehicle gasoline tax paid by users of off-road vehicles and nonhighway roads, and from the amount paid for by off-road vehicle use permits.
- FARR revenue is from \$2.16 of each concealed pistol license fee.
- These figures reflect the most recent revenue forecast in June 2024. The next forecast will be in September 2024.

WWRP Expenditure Rate by Organization (1990-Current)

Agency	Committed	Expenditures	% Expended
Local Agencies	\$388,508,703	\$345,193,450	89%
Department of Fish and Wildlife	\$246,153,030	\$219,808,337	89%
Department of Natural Resources	\$219,212,315	\$168,279,687	77%
State Parks and Recreation Commission	\$185,738,844	\$158,600,776	85%
Nonprofits	\$69,633,990	\$51,877,886	75%
Conservation Commission	\$14,839,070	\$4,217,363	28%
Tribes	\$2,307,431	\$1,834,606	80%
Other			
Special Projects	\$735,011	\$735,011	100%
Total	\$1,127,128,394	\$950,547,116	84%

Performance Measures for Fiscal Year 2025

The following performance data are for recreation and conservation projects in fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025). Data current as of December 18, 2024.

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Performance Measures

Measure	Target	Fiscal Year-to-Date	Status	Notes
Grant agreements mailed within 120 days of funding	90%	100%	●	Fifteen of fifteen agreements have been mailed on time this fiscal year.
Grants under agreement within 180 days of funding	95%	100%	●	Eleven of eleven projects were under agreement within 180 days.
Progress reports responded to within fifteen days	90%	93%	●	Board staff received 425 progress reports and responded to them in an average of six days.
Projects closed within 150 days of funding end date	85%	73%	●	Thirty-six of forty-nine projects have closed on time.
Projects in Backlog	5	39	●	There are thirty-nine board projects in the backlog to be closed out.

Attachments

Attachment A: Table of Closed Projects from October 1, 2024, to December 18, 2024

Projects Completed and Closed from October 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024

Project Number and Type	Project Sponsor	Project Name	Program	Closed On
16-1344 Acquisition	Department of Fish and Wildlife	Cowiche Watershed 2016	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Critical Habitat	10/04/2024
16-2544 Development	Department of Fish and Wildlife	Skagit Wildlife Area Headquarters Boat Launch Redevelopment	Boating Facilities Program: State	10/25/2024
18-1272 Development	Seattle	Green Lake Dock Replacement and Restrooms	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Water Access	11/15/2024
18-1334 Acquisition	Department of Fish and Wildlife	Cowiche Watershed 2018	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Critical Habitat	10/02/2024
18-1456 Development	Department of Natural Resources	Middle Fork Snoqualmie River Access Development Phase I	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Water Access	11/07/2024
18-1610 Development	Department of Fish and Wildlife	2018 Lake Tahuya Public Access Development	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: State Lands Development	10/18/2024
18-1669 Restoration	Department of Natural Resources	Columbia Hills Grassland Restoration	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: State Lands Restoration	10/04/2024
18-1733 Development	Department of Natural Resources	Tiger Mountain State Forest View Shelter and Trail Connections	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: State Lands Development	10/22/2024
18-2349 Development	Department of Fish and Wildlife	Lake Cavanaugh Access Redevelopment	Boating Facilities Program: State	10/25/2024
18-2350 Development	Department of Fish and Wildlife	Lake Whatcom Access Redevelopment	Boating Facilities Program: State	10/02/2024
19-1539 Acquisition	Columbia Land Trust	Trout Lake Valley Phase 4 Agricultural Easement	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Farmland Preservation	11/05/2024
20-1238	Wenatchee	Wenatchee City Pool Renovation	Youth Athletic Facilities: Large	10/15/2024

Project Number and Type	Project Sponsor	Project Name	Program	Closed On
<u>20-1287</u> Development Restoration	Department of Fish and Wildlife	Okanogan County Shrub-steppe Restoration	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: State Lands Restoration	10/24/2024
<u>20-1308</u> Acquisition	Spokane Valley	Flora Road River Trail Property	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Local Parks	10/04/2024
<u>20-1353</u> Restoration	Department of Natural Resources	White Salmon Oak Natural Resources Conservation Area Oak Restoration	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: State Lands Restoration	12/02/2024
<u>20-1446</u> Acquisition	Wenatchee	Wenatchee Foothills Regional Recreation Area	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Local Parks	10/16/2024
<u>20-1534</u> Acquisition	Olympia	Yelm Highway Community Park Acquisition	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Local Parks	11/21/2024
<u>20-1538</u> Development	Department of Fish and Wildlife	Lewis Butte-Riser Lake Trailhead Development	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: State Lands Development	12/12/2024
<u>20-1553</u> Development	Olympia	LBA Park Field #2 Renovation	Youth Athletic Facilities: Large	11/22/2024
<u>20-1592</u> Restoration	Department of Natural Resources	Admiralty Inlet Natural Area Preserve Rare Prairies Restoration 2021	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: State Lands Restoration	10/14/2024
<u>20-1629</u> Restoration	Department of Natural Resources	Puget Lowland Forest Restoration	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: State Lands Restoration	10/25/2024
<u>20-1632</u> Development	Republic	Republic Skatepark	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Local Parks	11/08/2024
<u>20-1712</u> Development	Omak	Omak Eastside Park Skatepark Upgrade	Youth Athletic Facilities: Large	12/02/2024
<u>20-1739</u> Development	Snoqualmie	Centennial Fields All-Inclusive Playground	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Local Parks	12/06/2024

Project Number and Type	Project Sponsor	Project Name	Program	Closed On
20-1751 Restoration	Blaine	Marine Park Beach Naturalization	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account	10/09/2024
20-1778 Development	Port Angeles	Race Street to Olympic National Park Shared Use Trail	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Trails	10/29/2024
20-1819 Development	Port of Silverdale	Expand Silverdale Float Facilities and Enhance Beach	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account	12/23/2024
20-1987 Development	Cowlitz County	Cowlitz Public Shooting Range Phase 3	Firearms and Archery Range Recreation	12/04/2024
20-2185 Development	Department of Natural Resources	Eagles Nest Vista Development	Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities: Nonhighway Road	12/11/2024
20-2194 Maintenance	U.S. Forest Service, Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest: Snoqualmie Ranger District	Snoqualmie Ranger District Off-Highway Vehicle Motorized Recreation	Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities: Off-Road Vehicle	10/04/2024
20-2195 Development	U.S. Forest Service, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest: Wenatchee River Ranger District	Number 2 Canyon Trail System Development Phase 3	Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities: Nonmotorized	11/14/2024
20-2420 Development	Skookum Archers Club	ADA Access and Course Improvements	Firearms and Archery Range Recreation	11/15/2024
22-1540 Development	Cathlamet	Cathlamet Skate Park	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program: Local Parks	11/21/2024
22-2288 Education	Pacific Northwest 4-Wheel Drive	Protect and Educate Trail Users	Recreational Trails Program: Education	10/07/2024
22-2473 Planning	Carbonado	Carbonado PROS Plan	Planning for Recreation Access	12/19/2024
22-2505 Planning	Waterville	Waterville and Badger Mountain Plans	Planning for Recreation Access	12/18/2024

Project Number and Type	Project Sponsor	Project Name	Program	Closed On
23-1954 Education	Mount Saint Helens Institute	Mount Saint Helens Stewards for Responsible Recreation 2	Recreational Trails Program: Education	10/07/2024

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Briefing Memo

APPROVED BY RCO DIRECTOR MEGAN DUFFY

Meeting Date: January 29, 2025

Title: Farm and Forest Account Policy Changes

Prepared By: Nicholas Norton, Policy and Planning Specialist

Summary

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board approved two temporary policy changes to the Farm and Forest Account for the 2022 and 2024 grant rounds: eliminating the non-state, non-federal match requirement, and allowing costs increase requests for projects that need additional funds. Recreation and Conservation Office staff are requesting board direction on whether to make these temporary changes permanent.

Board Action Requested

This item will be a:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Request for Decision
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Request for Direction
<input type="checkbox"/>	Briefing

Background

In April 2022, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff proposed permanently eliminating the 10 percent non-state, non-federal match requirement, and allowing for cost increases in the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's (WWRP) Farm and Forest Account, which includes both the Farmland and Forestland Preservation Programs. These proposals were in response to a persistent lack of applications, external feedback, and financial pressures created by the COVID-19 pandemic. This discussion resulted in the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board temporarily approving these policy proposals for the 2022 and 2024 grant round ([Resolution 2022-05](#)).

Beginning in the spring of 2024, RCO policy staff initiated a comprehensive review of the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP). The scope of this review included looking at these temporary policies related to non-state, non-federal match and cost increases in the Farm and Forest Account.

As a result, there is now a better understanding of the policy change impacts to applications and project implementation, as well as additional feedback regarding policy

priorities from key partner organizations. RCO staff is requesting board direction on whether these two temporary changes should be made permanent. Depending on board direction, RCO staff can gather additional information as requested and solicit formal public comment on these policy proposals in preparation for a decision at a future meeting.

Non-State, Non-Federal Match

By statute, the board may not approve a project where the local agency or nonprofit's share is less than the amount awarded from the Farm and Forest Account (1:1 match).¹ Prior to the temporary waiver, board policy required local agencies and nonprofit applicants to contribute at least 10 percent of the total project cost from a non-state, non-federal source (local match). The board may elect to waive this local match requirement on a case-by-case basis.

This board policy requirement is consistent with WWRP's Outdoor Recreation and Habitat Conservation account programs and is supported by the rule in Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 286-13-045(4), where "*The board may require the applicant to provide a portion of its matching resources in local resources.*" This board policy has traditionally been pointed to as a mechanism to ensure that grant applicants are committed to the projects and that the projects are a priority for the organization.

Rationale

The primary rationale for permanently removing the local match requirement in the Farm and Forest Account relates to local match availability, and its impact on the primary applicants to the program. Specifically, dedicated local funding for conservation easements (or other less-than-fee acquisitions) on working lands is limited and disparately available across Washington State. There are a few counties (King, Whatcom, Skagit) where funding is specifically dedicated towards farmland easement or lease acquisitions; however, that is the exception rather than the rule. This is in contrast to funding for parks and open space funding, where a portion of jurisdictional revenue is more frequently dedicated towards continued capital development.

Aside from the Washington State Conservation Commission, which is not subject to the 1:1 or local match requirements, nonprofit land trusts are currently the most frequent applicant to the Farm and Forest Account. In the absence of a clear local funding source,

¹Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(9)

nonprofits largely have two options to meet the local match requirement: 1) voluntary landowner donations (land value or cash); or 2) general operating funds used for staff time on the project. Both funding sources can restrict the ability of local partners to propose priority projects. Many landowners have a limited ability to donate value and often rely on the value of the conservation easement to ensure that agricultural operations remain viable into the future. For nonprofits, implementing a publicly funded project without reimbursement for staff time can be prohibitive.

In addition, these types of funding sources can present a higher risk to project completion once funding is awarded. If the fair market value of a conservation easement comes in higher than estimated during the application, this can leave a project short on funding. If a landowner is unable to voluntarily contribute additional funds due to their financial circumstances, the project can fall through. Land values and the costs of due diligence requirements, such as surveys and appraisals, have significantly increased in recent years. This has made it more difficult, if not impossible, to meet the 10 percent threshold using only donated staff time.

External Feedback

As part of an online survey sent to Farmland and Forestland applicants from 2016, removing the 10 percent non-state, non-federal match requirement was the top ranked board policy change to help reduce barriers to applications. In addition, as part of a memo submitted to RCO by the Washington Association of Land Trusts in March 2022, removing the local match requirement was noted as a top item that limits program demand. As part of the more recent farmland program review during the summer of 2024, partner organizations were grateful for the temporary changes and unanimously supported making the local match waiver permanent given the potential positive impacts for project development and implementation.

Recent Trends and Examples

There were twenty-nine project applications submitted to the Farm and Forest Account during the 2022 and 2024 grants rounds where the 10 percent non-state, non-federal match requirement would have previously applied. Of those twenty-nine projects, five of them did not propose any non-state, non-federal match sources. An additional nine projects proposed less than 10 percent non-state, non-federal match, largely in the form of cash donations from the landowner or applicant. Together, this data indicates that many applicants are still leveraging local sources of funding where possible, but the waiver has allowed them to propose lower amounts where necessary relative to the needs of the organization and landowner.

The board also recently approved two individual requests to waive a portion of the 10 percent non-state, non-federal match requirement for projects funded prior to the 2022 and 2024 grant rounds. One was requested by the Okanogan Land Trust for their Teas Ranch ([20-1619](#)) project, and the other by Columbia Land Trust for their Trout Lake Valley Phase 4 Agricultural Easement ([19-1539](#)) project. In both cases, the waiver request was due to a land value increase relative to the initial budget, as well as the receipt of federal funding that was able to back-fill any deficit in local match created by the overall increase in project cost.

There was not an increase in farmland applications during the 2022 and 2024 grant rounds relative to previous years; however, the average RCO request has increased significantly. For example, the average RCO request from 2016, 2018, and 2020 grants rounds combined was approximately \$374,000, while the average request from the 2022 and 2024 grant rounds combined was \$650,000. This is partially due to increasing land values across the state, but may also indicate that the non-state, non-federal match requirement was serving as a limiting factor in overall project size.

There was also no increase in applications to the Forestland Preservation Program during the 2022 and 2024 grant rounds. However, it is difficult to interpret the impact of temporary local match policy changes on the Forestland Protection Program, as the grant requests are capped at \$500,000 and there is typically only enough funding available to fund one or two projects per biennium. This likely has a much stronger impact on application demand and project size than local match policy changes.

Pros and Cons

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By law, applicants will still need to secure matching resources and currently receive bonus points for securing more than the minimum required match.• Would help make more projects feasible in places where local match is limited.• Reduces the organizational financial burden experienced by nonprofits if no local match is available.• Alleviates the need to ask farmers to donate property value which could jeopardize project viability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This change would make local match policy different than the Recreation and Habitat Conservation Accounts.

Cost Increases

The temporary cost increase policy in the Farm and Forest Account is modeled after other RCO grant programs for acquisitions. Specifically, it allows the director to approve a cost increase of up to 10 percent of the total project costs limited to a parcel-by-parcel appraised and reviewed value. Cost increase requests of over 10 percent would go to the board for consideration on a case-by-case basis.

Prior to this temporary policy change, a sponsor would need to go to the board to request a waiver of the policy preventing cost increase requests and to request additional funds, regardless of the percent of the parcel-by-parcel appraised and reviewed value.

Rationale

Cost increases in the Farm and Forest Account make sense for two major reasons. First, it can be particularly difficult to predict the actual cost of a conservation easement at

application. Unlike estimating the fee title land cost, the easement value is only a portion of the overall property value and is influenced by specific terms and conditions that are typically negotiated as part of project implementation. If a sponsor underestimates the value of a conservation easement and does not request enough grant funds, then it usually results in either a withdrawal of the proposal, reliance on the landowner to voluntarily make up the difference or reducing the number of acres in the projects. Collectively, this can impact overall program outcomes, reduce effective use of state funds, and/or reduce willingness of landowners to participate.

Another rationale for cost increases is that, to varying degrees, both the Farmland and Forestland program have had recent funding rounds where there is more money available than overall requests. In that type of situation, there may be a limited pool of alternates able to accept any returned funding, such that providing cost increases represent a strategic way to better support additional project implementation.

External Feedback

This change was considered a high priority by respondents during outreach performed prior to the 2022 grant round. In addition, as part of the more recent farmland program review during the summer of 2024, partner organizations were grateful for the temporary changes and unanimously supported making the cost increase policy permanent given the potential positive impacts for project development and implementation.

Recent Trends and Examples

In January 2023, the board approved a request for three substantial cost increases for projects funded in the 2020 farmland grant round. In addition, within the last two years, the director has approved four different cost increase requests from projects in the Farm and Forest Account.

Since the 2024 grant round has just closed, none of those projects have been awarded funds and would not yet be able to request a cost increase. In addition, there have been no cost increase requests from projects funded in the 2022 grant round. This may be because many of these projects have not completed an appraisal that establishes the value of the conservation easement.

Pros and Cons

Pros	Cons
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates alignment with policies in other WWRP categories. • Cost increases would only be approved if there are sufficient funds available in the account after viable applications are funded. • Sponsors will still need to provide match for cost increases. • A cost increase option may reduce the number of scope changes or withdrawn projects. • Alleviates the burden of asking farmers to donate property value on short notice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could potentially mean that the account funds fewer projects.
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Next Steps

Depending on board direction for these two Farm and Forest Account proposals, RCO staff will perform additional research and/or seek public comment. Depending on public comment received, RCO staff will then prepare recommendations and requests for approval as appropriate for future board meetings.

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Briefing Memo

APPROVED BY RCO DIRECTOR MEGAN DUFFY

Meeting Date: January 29, 2025

Title: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Urban Wildlife Category Terminology Update

Prepared By: Julia McNamara, Board Liaison; Ben Donatelle, Policy Specialist

Summary

For the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Urban Wildlife Habitat Category, a modified definition of urban clusters as defined by the United States Census Bureau, was used for project location eligibility. After the 2020 Census, the Bureau revised its urban area categories and is no longer using the term urban clusters. The Urban Wildlife Habitat Category needs updated terminology and location eligibility measurements due to the Bureau's changes.

Recreation and Conservation Office staff are seeking direction on several different project location eligibility criteria.

Board Action Requested

This item will be a:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Request for Decision
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Request for Direction
<input type="checkbox"/>	Briefing

Urban Cluster Overview

In 2018, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board directed staff to review the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's (WWRP) Urban Wildlife Habitat category. While reviewing, staff and a policy workgroup consisting of advisory committee members Washington Association of Land Trust, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition, and recent applicants, identified potential issues with project location eligibility.

The workgroup recommended broader eligibility requirements to more effectively preserve habitat in rapidly urbanizing areas of the state. In doing so, the workgroup recommended the board consider the United States Census Bureau's definition of urban areas to expand project eligibility.

In the decennial census, the bureau defined two types of urban areas: urbanized areas which represent populations greater than 50,000, and urban clusters which represent at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people.

The current policy in [Manual 10b](#), adopted on October 2, 2019, via Resolution 2019-27 reads:

To be eligible in this category, the land must be in one of the following areas:

- *Within five miles of the designated urban growth area of a city or town with a population of 5,000 or more*
- *Within five miles of a designated urban cluster with a population of 5,000 or more*
- *Within five miles of an adopted urban growth boundary in a county that has a population density of 250 people per square mile or greater.*

Ultimately, the board chose a population threshold of 5,000 in alignment with [RCW 79A.25.250](#) "urban areas" definition, which is the standard applied to other Recreation and Conservation Office programs that include urban areas.

Census Bureaus Updated Urban Area Classification

In 2020, the Census Bureau simplified urban area designations by eliminating the different classifications, including urban clusters. Now, urban areas are defined by a minimum population threshold of 5,000 or a housing unit of 2,000.

While the minimum population threshold of 5,000 aligns with Resolution 2019-17, the urban clusters language is no longer applicable. Additionally, the Census Bureau's updated urban areas definition includes housing units, which is not a measurement the board has used for this program.

Updated Terminology Opportunity

Since the Census Bureau updated their definition of urban areas, the Urban Wildlife Category's policy can no longer use urban clusters as an eligible criterion. Therefore, the policy needs to be updated to align with the Census Bureau's new definition for urban areas.

Staff have proposed two potential solutions for the board to consider. The goal of this revision is to ensure eligibility is maintained for those communities that met the 2019 board adopted definition.

Proposed Solutions

Option One

Update urban clusters terminology to urban areas and apply the population designation of 5,000, while excluding housing units.

Possible Outcomes

This option would keep the current parameters the same, including communities captured in the 2019 definition. Additional communities might be captured if they have experienced population growth resulting in 5,000 people or more.

However, there is no guarantee that additional communities will become eligible in this program.

Option Two

Use the full definition of urban areas, including housing units

Possible Outcomes

If the Census Bureau's full urban areas definition (population and housing units) is applied to this program, more communities would become eligible. This would include Cle Elum, Long Beach, the Union/Tahuya/Belfair area, and Friday Harbor.

Including housing units creates less variability within program eligibility as the number of units does not change as frequently as population levels. For instance, the population of an area can change significantly with the season or long-term vacation rentals.

Next Steps

After receiving board feedback, staff will draft a policy update, solicit public input, and ask for board approval at the April 2025 meeting. The updated eligibility criteria would be added into Manual 10b: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Habitat Conservation Account to use in the 2026 grant cycle.

Attachments

- A. [Census Bureau Changes](#)
- B. 2019 October Decision Memo

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Briefing Memo

APPROVED BY RCO DIRECTOR KALEEN COTTINGHAM

Meeting Date: October 2-3, 2019

Title: Urban Wildlife Habitat Category Review -- Final Recommendations

Prepared By: Ben Donatelle, Natural Resource Policy Specialist

Summary

This memo summarizes the final recommendations of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's Urban Wildlife Habitat policy workgroup. The recommendations propose changes to the project proposal evaluation criteria, increase the area of eligible project locations, and more equitably distribute funding between state agencies and local entities. Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff recommends adoption of the proposed changes as set forth in this memo and resolution 2019-27.

Board Action Requested

This item will be a:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Request for Decision
<input type="checkbox"/>	Request for Direction
<input type="checkbox"/>	Briefing

Background

In January 2018, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) directed RCO staff to review the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's (WWRP) Urban Wildlife Habitat category. The goal of the review was to evaluate how well the funded projects align with the statutory intent of the category, make recommendations for necessary changes to program policies and evaluation criteria, and include criteria related to climate change. Issues identified and policy topics discussed by the workgroup formed for this purpose were summarized in [Item 4](#) at the April 2019 board meeting. Proposed changes to the evaluation criteria, project location and funding allocation policies were presented to the board in [Item 5](#) at the June 2019 board meeting.

RCO staff worked with the workgroup between January and June to develop recommendations for evaluation criteria and policy changes. The board reviewed proposed changes, and RCO staff solicited public comment from July 15 through August

12. The workgroup then reconvened on August 22 to review the public comments and finalize the proposed evaluation criteria and policy recommendations. This memo details the final recommendations proposed by the workgroup and ultimately requests a decision from the board.

Summary of Public Comments

Proposed policy recommendations and evaluation criteria were posted on RCO's website and public comments were requested between July 15 and August 12, 2019. RCO sent notice requesting public comments to a PRISM generated email list of over 900 recipients. In total, RCO received comments from five individuals.

Generally, all the comments were supportive of the evaluation criteria changes and modification of the funding allocation formula. One comment advocated for equally balancing the point values between the ecological benefits criterion and the public access criterion. Other comments suggested slight modifications to language in specific questions to improve clarity or meaning.

One comment did not support expanding the area of project location eligibility. The other comments were supportive of expanding the project location policy. Furthermore, one comment suggested aligning with the U.S. Census Bureau's designation for urbanized areas of 2,500 for the minimum population threshold to determine project area eligibility.

A table summarizing the public comments and RCO staff's response is included in Attachment A, while a full-text copy of each public comment is included in Attachment B.

Final Proposed Evaluation Criteria

Summary

The changes to the evaluation criteria proposed below are recommended to accomplish four primary goals which were developed by the workgroup based on direction from the board:

- Maintain the category focus on protecting functioning native habitat;
- Increase the number of applications and funded projects from local entities;
- Increase human-nature interaction by providing close-to-home opportunities for nature-based activities, especially for underserved communities;
- Increase habitat connectivity, landscape permeability, protect ecosystem services, and enhance resilience to future climate impacts

These goals are being accomplished through the evaluation criteria questions in several ways:

- The workgroup recognizes the need to maintain connectivity and provide refuge for all types of species, both rare and common, in the urban setting and therefore recommends reducing the emphasis on species and communities with special status.
- The workgroup recommends asking questions about public engagement, accessibility of the site, and specific benefits for underserved communities.
- The workgroup recommends including reference to climate adaptation planning, carbon sequestration, and other ecosystem service benefits in the questions and examples provided.
- The workgroup recommends balancing the points awarded between the ecological benefits and public benefits questions, with a slightly higher emphasis on ecological benefits.

Taken together, the evaluation criteria proposed below have been developed based on the consensus recommendations of the Urban Wildlife Habitat workgroup after consideration of the board's direction, significant review of past funding trends, and the public's comments. Additionally, the WWRP statutes (RCW 79A.15.060) guide the evaluation criteria by requiring the board to undertake specific considerations of all projects proposed for funding. RCO staff has provided a table (Attachment C) which explains how and where each statutory consideration has been incorporated into the proposed evaluation criteria questions.

Urban Wildlife Habitat Category

State Agencies and Local Entities (Including Local Governments, Tribes, and Nonprofits)

Urban Wildlife Habitat means lands that provide habitat important to fish and wildlife in proximity to a metropolitan area.¹ Urban wildlife habitat also provides an opportunity for human awareness of the importance of nature and the environmental benefits it provides.

PROPOSED: Urban Wildlife Habitat Category Evaluation Summary			
Score By	Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Possible Points
Not Scored	Project Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location maps • Project goals and objectives 	Not scored
Advisory Committee	1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project area composition • Species and communities • Pollinator habitat • Landscape characteristics 	40
Advisory Committee	2. Planning and Community Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan support • Public engagement • Threat to the site • Level of protection 	15
Advisory Committee	3. Public Access and Community Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public access, health, recreation, or cultural opportunities • Education and citizen science • Underserved communities • Multiple benefits 	35
Advisory Committee	4. Management and Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and stewardship plan • Restoration needs • Organizational and Staff capacity 	15
RCO Staff	5. Growth Management Act	Growth Management Act preference	0
RCO Staff	6. Population	Population of, and proximity to, the nearest urban area	10
Total Possible Points =			115

¹Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.010 (12)

Project Introduction

This is an opportunity to set the stage for the project. The following detailed criteria will provide an opportunity to describe the project in more depth; however, the intent here is primarily to help orient the evaluators.

- a. Locate the project on statewide, regional, and site maps to help orient the evaluators to the project area and its context within the landscape; and
- b. briefly provide a broad overview of the site and the project's goals and objectives (e.g. acquisition goals, habitat or ecosystem type, and opportunities for connecting people with nature)

▲ Project introduction is not scored.

Detailed Scoring Criteria

1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics

- a. Describe the project area and the ecological makeup of the site(s): Include in your description the ecosystem structure and composition, and/or habitat types targeted for conservation; the number of acres; the plant and animal species present and the significance of the site to the target species. Describe how the targeted species currently use the site.
- b. Describe any of the plant or animal species at the site that are considered threatened or endangered by any local, state, federal or international species list. Describe the extent to which noxious weeds or other invasive species occur on site.
- c. How does the site support the feeding, nesting and reproduction of pollinator species (e.g. bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, etc.)?²
- d. Define your service area or jurisdiction. How unique is this site within your service area or jurisdiction? Is this site part of a larger ownership or management unit?
- e. What are the land uses surrounding the project area? How does this project connect, enhance, or provide ecosystem services to the surrounding landscape? Are there other protected lands (public or private) near the site that have complementary or compatible habitat characteristics for the target species (consider wide-ranging or migratory species)?

² Laws of 2019, Ch. 353, §3

Applicants must complete and submit the “Species or Communities with Special Status” table in Appendix A. This is a required part of the application. Staff may verify the information and evaluators will be given a copy of the table along with the other project materials. As part of the presentation, applicants must describe the significance of the information to evaluators for scoring.

▲ **Maximum Score: 40 points**

2. Planning and Community Support

- a. How is this project supported by a current plan or a coordinated state or regional prioritization effort? Who is the plan’s proponent(s), and how does the plan address this specific project, habitat, or ecosystem type (e.g., a local open space plan, comprehensive growth management plan, or shoreline master program; a watershed or salmon recovery plan; species management plan; climate adaptation plan; Puget Sound Action Agenda; etc.)?
- b. Describe the public engagement process used to identify this project or habitat as a priority. For example, how were local citizens, organizations, underserved communities, tribal governments and/or elected officials engaged, and how was their input incorporated into the project selection and design? Describe the support or partnership commitments you have secured for the project.
- c. What is the threat to the site’s ecological integrity? Include in your discussion any anticipated ecological changes; the zoning and land use potential of the site; and regulatory protections currently afforded to the site. Why are land use regulations not sufficient to achieve the project goals?
- d. For acquisition projects, what level of protection (fee title acquisition vs. easement) will be placed on the property? Is this acquisition part of a phased project? Is a conservation easement sufficient to achieve the project purpose? If not, please explain why.

▲ **Maximum Score: 15 points**

3. Public Access and Community Benefits

- a. What public access, public health, recreational, educational, or cultural opportunities will this site provide? In your description, please describe in detail how the public will experience the site and any plans for integrating environmental education and/or citizen science at this site. Also consider how people may access this site using

- public and/or active transportation (i.e. is there existing or planned multi-modal transportation that will bring people to or within a 10 minute walk of this site?)
- b. How does this project address the needs of communities who have been historically underserved by or excluded from opportunities to access nature? Please describe how their input was incorporated into the planning and design of this project, how they will safely access this site, how they will experience the stated benefits, and how they may be involved in the future of this project. .
 - c. How does this project provide other multiple benefits to the community, habitat, or surrounding ecological landscape? Include in your discussion:
 - i. Other resource uses or management practices that may help achieve additional conservation benefits (e.g. managed grazing for weed control, supporting a community forest, etc.);
 - ii. How this project provides other ecosystem service benefits (e.g. protecting tree canopy cover in a dense urban area, aquifer recharge, flood attenuation, increased fire security, carbon storage, etc.).
 - d. If development is being proposed at the site, please describe the development plan, site design, and implementation timeline. How does the proposed development contribute to the public needs (educational, health, recreation, cultural, etc.) described above and encourage an appreciation for the protected ecosystem? How will it be compatible with the surrounding natural habitat?

▲ **Maximum Score: 35 points**

4. Management and Stewardship

- a. Describe the anticipated stewardship and management needs of the site, including those related to the species and ecosystems, public access, recreation, education, and cultural opportunities. To the degree possible, include the desired future condition of the site, an estimate of stewardship and management costs, and plans to maintain the ecological viability of the site in consideration of future climate impacts, changes to surrounding land uses, and development pressure.
- b. Describe any restoration actions, if any are needed, to improve the habitat function or complexity on-site. How will the restoration work be funded? Who will complete the work? What is the proposed timeline to complete the restoration work?
- c. What is your organization's experience in managing a site with these, or similar, conservation values, habitat characteristics, and public access opportunities? What staff, volunteer, and financial resources are available to maintain the site? What is the

source of funding for this ongoing work?

▲ **Maximum Score: 15 points**

RCO Staff Scored Questions

5. Growth Management Act Preference

Has the applicant made progress toward meeting the requirements of the Growth Management Act?

State law³ requires that:

- A. Whenever a state agency is considering awarding grants to finance public facilities, it shall consider whether the applicant⁴ has adopted a comprehensive plan and development regulations as required by Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.040.
- B. When reviewing such requests, the state agency shall accord additional preference to applicants that have adopted the comprehensive plan and development regulations. An applicant is deemed to have satisfied the requirements for adopting a comprehensive plan and development regulations if it:
 - Adopts or has adopted within the time periods specified in state law;
 - Adopts or has adopted by the time it requests a grant or loan; or
 - Demonstrates substantial progress toward adopting within the time periods specified in state law. An agency that is more than 6 months out of compliance with the time periods has not demonstrated substantial progress.
- C. A request from an applicant planning under state law shall be accorded no additional preference over a request from an applicant not planning under this state law.

This question is scored by RCO staff based on information from the state Department of Commerce's Growth Management Services. Scoring occurs after RCO's technical completion deadline. If an agency's comprehensive plan, development regulation, or

³ Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250

⁴ County, city, or town applicants only. This segment of the question does not apply to state agency, tribal government, nonprofits, or lead entity applicants.

amendment has been appealed to the Growth Management Hearings Board, the agency cannot be penalized during the period of appeal.

▲ Point Range: -1 to 0 points

- 1 point The applicant does *not* meet the countywide planning policy requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
- 0 points The applicant *meets* the countywide planning policy requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
- 0 points The applicant is a nonprofit organization, state or federal agency.

RCO staff subtracts a maximum of 1 point.

6. Population

Where is this project located with respect to urban growth areas, cities/towns, and urban clusters?⁵

This question is scored by RCO staff based on a map provided by the applicant. To receive credit, depict on a map 1) your project boundary or your geographic envelop and 2) the nearest city, town, or urban cluster. Next, draw a straight line, measure and record on the map the shortest distance in miles "as the crow flies" between 1 and 2 above. Include a scale and legend on the map for reference.

Population of, and Proximity to, the Nearest Urban Area

- A. The score is based on the population of the largest city, town or urban cluster within 5 miles of the project (using the most current published Washington State Office of Financial Management population estimates):

- 0 points 0-4,999
- 1 point 5,000-9,999
- 2 points 10,000-29,999
- 3 points 30,000-149,999
- 4 points 150,000-299,999
- 5 points 300,000-and above

⁵ Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(b)

B. The project's proximity to the closest city, town, or urban cluster (of any size).

5 points within 1 mile, or inside the UGA/municipal boundary/urban cluster

4 points 1.01 – 2 miles

3 points 2.01 – 3 miles

2 points 3.01 – 4 miles

1 point 4.01 – 5 miles

▲ Point Range: 0-10 points

Final Proposed Project Location Policy

Summary

The proposed policy recommends expanding the area of eligible project locations. The board's current project location eligibility policy states:

To be eligible in this category, the land must lie:

- Within the corporate limits of a city or town with a population of at least 5,000 or within 5 miles of such a city or town (or its adopted Urban Growth Area boundary); or
- Within 5 miles of an adopted Urban Growth Area in a county that has a population density of at least 250 people per square mile.

In the most densely populated urban communities, vacant land exhibiting functionally intact habitat characteristics is increasingly scarce, which is one reason applications from local entities has declined over previous grant cycles. Opportunities for protecting functioning and diverse habitat lands increase dramatically on the fringe of urban areas but so too does development pressure. Therefore, the workgroup recognized need to expand the footprint of eligible project locations to get out in front of urbanization, and to increase the area where projects may be eligible (i.e. increase the number of eligible local communities).

How it differs from the current policy

The proposed policy uses "urban clusters" as an additional determinant of project location eligibility. As part of the decennial census, the [U.S. Census Bureau](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural/2010-urban-rural.html) delineates urban areas from rural areas across the country and controlled territories. Census designated urban areas are comprised of, "a densely settled core of census tracts and/or blocks that meet minimum population density requirements..."⁶ The Bureau designates two types of urban areas, 1) urbanized areas which represent populations greater than 50,000; and 2) urban clusters which represent at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people. Because urban areas are based on census tracts and blocks, they are not constrained to jurisdictional (county or city) boundaries and therefore can be more representative of an urban footprint.

The Washington State Office of Financial Management's Small Area Estimates Program augments the census designated urban areas by annually modeling their populations

⁶ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural/2010-urban-rural.html>

using official April 1 population estimates for the state as a control. These modeled population estimates are then embedded in a shape file, which depicts their footprint within the state. Again, because the areas are based on census tracts and blocks, they are not aligned with the jurisdictional boundaries and can be more representational of the urban footprint and population growth.

Conclusion

The intent of the Urban Wildlife Habitat category is to protect intact wildlife habitat near urban and urbanizing communities before it is converted to other uses. Early on, RCO's workgroup recognized the need to expand the area of eligibility for project location to get out in front of where development may be occurring but not represented by jurisdictional boundaries in rapidly urbanizing areas. Using urban clusters is one way in which to do so. This recommendation both meets the intent of the program and accomplishes the workgroup's goal. However, the workgroup was not comfortable lowering the population threshold to 2,500 as the US Census does, primarily to align with RCW 79A.25.250 which designates urban areas as those with a population of 5,000 or greater.

With that, the Workgroup recommends the project location policy be revised as stated below. The revision expands the area of eligibility to allow projects within five miles of urban clusters that have a population greater than 5,000 to compete for Urban Wildlife Habitat funds.

Recommended Policy

To be eligible in this category, the land must be located:

- Within five miles of the designated urban growth area of a city or town, or a designated urban cluster with a population of 5,000 or more; or
- Within five miles of an adopted urban growth boundary in a county that has a population density of 250 people per square mile or greater.

Final Proposed Funding Allocation Formula

Summary

The goal of the recommended policy is to provide a more equalized distribution of funding between state agency and local entity sponsored projects.

Current board policy requires the category funds be distributed as follows:

*40 percent to local agencies, Native American tribes, and nonprofit organizations;
40 percent to state agencies; 20 percent to fully fund partially funded local agency,*

Native American tribe, and nonprofit organizations; then fully fund partially funded state agency projects, and apply any remaining amount to the next highest ranked project(s), regardless of sponsor.

As explained in [Item 5](#) at the June 2019 board meeting, since the funding allocation formula was first adopted in 2008, state agency projects with extremely large budgets (often in the millions of dollars) are most likely to absorb up to the entire 20 percent of remaining funds after the first 80 percent are allocated. Therefore, the workgroup recommends realigning the funding allocation to increase the amount of funding dedicated to each sponsor type while leaving some flexibility for the board to fund partially funded projects.

Workgroup Recommendation

The workgroup recommends modifying the funding allocation policy to distribute funds as follows:

45 percent to local agencies, Native American tribes, and nonprofit organizations; 45 percent to state agencies; 10 percent to fully fund partially funded local agency, Native American tribe, and nonprofit organization projects; then fully fund partially funded state agency projects, and apply any remaining amount to the next highest ranked project(s), regardless of sponsor.

Recommendations

Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff recommends adoption on the proposed changes as set forth in this memo and resolution 2019-27.

Next Steps

Following the Board's decision, RCO staff will incorporate any adopted changes into the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Manual 10B.

Attachments

Attachment A: Public Comments Summary with RCO staff responses

Attachment B: Full compiled public comments

Attachment C: Evaluation Criteria Statutory Crosswalk

Attachment D: Resolution 2019-27

Attachment A: Public Comments and RCO response

Committer Info	Summary of Comment Received	Date Received	Detailed Response	Response Date
<p>Karen Daubert, Citizen, Former RCFB Member</p> <p>Retired Executive Director, Washington Trails Association</p> <p>206-310-1792</p>	<p>In summary, I recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not expand the areas where UWH projects are located and not expand them to “urban clusters.” • Modify the criteria to put equal weight and points on public access and habitat value. • Approve the proposed 45/45/10 split. 	7/17/2019	<p><i>Project Area Eligibility</i> - The workgroup recognizes the tension between funding projects in highly developed urban areas, the lack of available highly-functioning wildlife habitat in the densest urban areas, and the need to get protect functional habitat in rapidly urbanizing areas of the state. Therefore, the workgroup maintains its recommendation to expand the areas of eligibility.</p> <p><i>Point Values</i> - The points available for habitat values and public access values are 30 and 35 percent of the overall score respectively. Considering this is a category Habitat Conservation Account, the workgroup felt a slight preference should be awarded to the Ecological and Biological Characteristics.</p>	8/13/2019
<p>Paul Knowles</p> <p>Parks Special Projects Manager</p>	<p>Overall, the changes are great (Nice work!). Our comments are as follows:</p>	7/25/2019	<p><i>Project Area Eligibility</i> – RCO staff will be sure to clearly explain the</p>	7/25/2019

<p>Spokane County Parks, Recreation & Golf</p> <p>pknowles@spokanecounty.org</p>	<p><i>Project Area Eligibility</i></p> <p><i>Proximity Qualifier</i> – Supportive of the Working Group’s recommendation of keeping the five-mile radius</p> <p><i>Population Qualifier</i> – Supportive of the Working Group’s recommendations with two caveats: 1) more clearly define “urban cluster” in subsequent manual updates; and 2) by opening this category up to smaller jurisdictions, RCO staff may run into additional compliance and implementation issues</p> <p><i>Funding Allocation Formula</i> Supportive of the Working Group’s recommendation to change the formula from 40/40/20 to 45/45/10.</p> <p>Evaluation Criteria proposed changes:</p> <p><i>General</i> – Overall supportive of the adjustments to weighting and evaluation criteria.</p> <p><i>Question 1 – Ecological and Biological Characteristics</i> “Species</p>	<p>project location eligibility policy in future manual updates.</p> <p><i>Evaluation Criteria</i> – Species with special status is a consideration required by the WWRP Statute and has been included as one of the considerations in the Ecological and Biological Characteristics criteria rather than as a stand-alone criterion as it was previously. Additionally, applicants will still be required to fill out the species with special status table. See the statutory crosswalk table for where all the statutory considerations are couched within the evaluation criteria.</p> <p><i>Population size</i> -</p> <p>Thank you for the comment, after discussion with the workgroup, RCO staff revised question 1c. We replaced the population size question with a question that relates to the significance of the site for the targeted species.</p> <p>The pollinator habitat question is a new statutory requirement resulting from the passage of</p>	
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	<p>or Communities with Special Status” has been removed entirely. This should be somehow re-incorporated into this question, as it’s a good guide for judging a high-quality habitat property vs. low quality.</p> <p>Describing the “size of populations present” may be difficult if not impossible for most jurisdictions to answer</p> <p>The pollinator question (c.) seems like it would provide little value to determining the quality of a project...</p> <p>It doesn’t appear there’s now any question regarding the “viability” of the habitat. If the project expands or connects an existing conserved area, this should be scored and a bonus to the project...</p> <p><i>Question 3 – Public Access and Community Benefits</i></p> <p>Maybe the active transportation component can include “future potential” to be connected via bus / bike transportation.</p>		<p>SSB 5552. RCO staff will note this statutory reference in the forthcoming manual update.</p> <p>Long term viability of a site is now evaluated as part of the Management and Stewardship criteria, Question 4a</p> <p><i>Future potential for active transportation –</i></p> <p>After discussion with the workgroup, we included reference to future planned multi-modal transportation in the question.</p>	
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<p>Laurence Reeves, Conservation Director Capitol Land Trust 4405 7th Ave SE Ste 306 Lacey, WA 98503 laurence@capitolandtrust.org</p>	<p><i>Project Area Eligibility</i></p> <p>Overall I support the recommendations of the workgroup with regard to the proximity and population qualifiers</p> <p><i>Funding Allocation Formula</i></p> <p>I also support the work group’s recommendation on the funding formula, to move to a 45/45/10 allocation</p> <p>Evaluation Criteria proposed changes</p> <p>I encourage the RCO to de-emphasize the focus on public access, given these grant funds can’t be used to facilitate public access infrastructure development, planning, programming or maintenance.</p>	<p>7/25/2019</p>	<p><i>Project Area Eligibility</i></p> <p>Thank you for your comment</p> <p><i>Funding Allocation Formula</i></p> <p>Thank you for your comment</p> <p><i>Evaluation Criteria: Public Access</i></p> <p>The Urban Wildlife Habitat category does allow for development of facilities and support structures to provide passive recreation opportunities as an eligible project activity.</p>	<p>7/25/19</p>
<p>Connie L. Blumen, Natural Resource Lands/Open Space King County Dept of Natural Resources and Parks Parks and Recreation Division</p>	<p>Evaluation Criteria proposed changes</p> <p>We appreciate that there is an opportunity to describe ways that grant applications for proposed projects are able to provide ecosystem services. (Such as 1e</p>	<p>8/12/2019</p>	<p><i>Ecosystem Services</i></p> <p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p><i>Adding carbon storage to list in 3cii</i></p>	<p>8/12/2019</p>

<p>201. S. Jackson Street, Suite 700 Seattle, WA 98104</p> <p>connie.blumen@kingcounty.gov</p>	<p><i>and 3c.ii in the Urban Wildlife Habitat policy</i>). However, we believe there is room to integrate this information into 2a as well...</p> <p>Additionally, we feel it would be beneficial if 3c.ii. explicitly included carbon storage in the list of ecosystem service benefits.</p>		<p>After discussions with the workgroup, RCO staff added carbon storage to the list of examples in 3c.ii.</p>	
<p>Theodore Holt, Conservation Transactions Director</p> <p>The Nature Conservancy, Washington Field Office</p> <p>74 Wall Street</p> <p>Seattle, WA 98121</p> <p>theodore.holt@tnc.org</p>	<p><i>Project Area Eligibility</i></p> <p>Would like to see more expansion of eligibility to increase the number and diversity of applications – specifically recommend aligning with the US Census Bureau’s definition of urban (2,500-50,000).</p> <p>Found the consideration of growth rate as a qualifier inspired. Encourages the workgroup to reconsider the decision to not adopt growth rates as a qualifier.</p> <p><i>Planning and Community Support</i></p> <p>Support the inclusion of underserved communities during the project selection and design process. Encourage RCO staff to</p>	<p>8/12/2019</p>	<p><i>Project Area Eligibility</i></p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p><i>Planning and Community Support</i></p> <p>Thank you for your comment, the RCFB is committed to doing what it can to addressing matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion.</p> <p><i>Public Access and Community Benefits</i></p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p>	

	<p>continue refining their programs to elevate the voices of communities who have historically been underserved including indigenous peoples. We would encourage the workgroup and RCO staff to consider additional changes to RCO programs, including composition of evaluation committees and workgroups, to address issues of importance to indigenous people and matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion.</p> <p><i>Public Access and Community Benefits</i></p> <p>Support the change in emphasis to provide more weight to public access and community benefits. We would like to thank the workgroup for incorporating evaluation criteria that reward projects that prioritize underserved communities.</p>			
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Attachment B: Compiled Public Comments (Full Text)

From: [Laurence Reeves](#)
To: [RCO MI Policy Changes \(RCO\)](#)
Subject: Urban Wildlife Habitat
Date: Thursday, July 25, 2019 12:37:05 PM
Attachments: [image003.png](#)

Greetings,

I am writing to provide comments on the proposed changes to the WWRP Urban Wildlife Habitat grant program. Overall I support the recommendations of the workgroup with regard to the proximity and population qualifiers, although it would have been nice to have some proposed definition for what constitutes an “urban cluster.” I also support the work group’s recommendation on the funding formula, to move to a 45/45/10 allocation (option 3). I think it is worth noting that there is an very uneven playing field between state and non-state applicants because of the onerous match requirements that only apply to non-state entities, so any steps to minimize that inequity is greatly appreciated.

Finally, with regard to the evaluation criteria, I encourage the RCO to de-emphasize the focus on public access, given these grant funds can’t be used to facilitate public access infrastructure development, planning, programming or maintenance. To tell grant applicants that public access is important but then refuse to help fund it seems unreasonable, especially when those of us in the non-profit world often have no other means for absorbing the high cost of providing and maintaining public access opportunities “in perpetuity.” I urge the RCO to consider how this unfunded mandate impacts their non-profit partners’ ability to conserve important wildlife habitat. Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback on these proposed program changes.

Regards, Laurence

Laurence Reeves Conservation
 Director Capitol Land Trust
 4405 7th Ave SE Ste 306 | Lacey, WA 98503
 360.943.3012 x 3 | CapitolLandTrust.org

From: [Karen Daubert](#)
To: [RCO MI Policy Changes \(RCO\)](#)
Cc: [Shiosaki, Michael](#)
Subject: Urban Wildlife Habitat
Date: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 1:42:02 PM

RCO Staff and RCFB Funding Board:

I served on the RCO Board for eight years and at that time, I led the last review of the Urban Wildlife Habitat (UWH) category. Thank you for the opportunity to comment now.

At the time of the last review, we devoted substantial parts of three meetings to this topic, researching the program’s history and trends, and discussing at length the overall program goals. We concluded that while there are other funding categories that fund habitat projects, there are few funding opportunities for habitat

closest to our DENSEST population centers – our URBAN centers. We researched the history of the grantees and found that our densest areas – Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane – previously received significant grants for their habitat projects but over the course of several decades, those grants were awarded to the far outskirts of urban growth boundaries, where, we concluded, fewer residents and visitors were able to experience this land and its wildlife.

We discussed the importance of providing opportunities for our young and our most diverse populations to witness firsthand the transformative power of wildlife. We talked about this being important to the future of Washington and to the future of supporting all RCO and WWRP programs. If our young do not have these opportunities, they will not advocate for vital funding in the future.

As a result, we devised the 40/40/20 split which insured that more grants would fund more local projects. We concluded that we needed evaluation criteria that prioritized public access! We needed to fund projects where citizens could touch, feel and experience the importance of nature.

And we discussed the for “urban.” I urge staff to research past projects and their true proximity to our population centers. I think the Chelan/Manson example is an excellent one. I visit there frequently and am impressed by how easy it is to escape all signs of population. While the towns are growing, the activities are centered around the lake and in the water. One only has to bicycle or hike or even drive outside of town a couple miles and there are very few visitors. And since most of the new residents live there seasonally, there is even less opportunity to value their nearby habitat. Even so, if proposed habitat is so important, it can be funded using other grant programs.

The unintended (I sincerely hope) consequence of this proposed policy change will be to fund less in our truly urban urban centers and to fund more in our rural areas that already have WWRP funds available.

In summary, I recommend:

Not expand the areas where UWH projects are located and not expand them to “urban clusters.”

Modify the criteria to put equal weight and points on public access and habitat value.

Approve the proposed 45/45/10 split.

Let me now if you have any questions,

Sincerely,

Karen Daubert, Former RCFB Member

Retired Executive Director, Washington Trails Association

From: [Blumen, Connie](#)
To: [RCO MI Policy Changes \(RCO\)](#)
Cc: [Donatelle, Ben \(RCO\)](#)
Subject: RCO proposed habitat policy changes
Date: Monday, August 12, 2019 11:55:43 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

RE: RCO PROPOSED HABITAT POLICY CHANGES, Comments from King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the revised the proposed changes to the RCO policies. (Per Ben's July 15 email below).

We have determined that they are consistent with, and thus support, many of King County's key strategic conservation and recreation initiatives and policy plans such as the following:

- [Land Conservation Initiative \(LCI\)](#): King County's strategic goal to protect the remaining high conservation value lands and secure our regional trail network within 30 years.
- [Equity focus of the Land Conservation Initiative](#): King County's work to ensure this land protection initiative provides a region-wide benefit to all residents and reverses historical inequitable access to health-promoting open space.
- [Strategic Climate Action Plan](#): King County's blueprint for action to confront climate change, integrating climate change into all areas of County operations and its work in the community.
- [Forest Carbon Program](#): King County's program to acquire high-value forests at risk of development and offer buyers the opportunity to purchase carbon credits generated by keeping carbon in the forests. King County then invests the revenue generated by the program to protect more forests and offer credits to additional buyers.
- Our policy plans, including our [King County Comprehensive Plan](#) and our [King County Open Space Plan](#) and our [Salmon Recovery \(WRIA\) Plans](#)

More specifically, we appreciate that there is an opportunity to describe ways that grant applications for proposed projects are able to provide ecosystem services. (*Such as 1e and 3c.ii in the Urban Wildlife Habitat policy*) However, we believe there is room to integrate this information into 2a as well, by allowing a description of how a project fits into a broader strategy to enhance ecosystem services. Additionally, we feel it would be beneficial if 3c.ii. explicitly included carbon storage in the list of ecosystem service benefits.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to review and provides comments on these proposed changes. If you have any questions about our comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We look forward to benefiting from these proposed changes which also help streamline and clarify existing policy language and application requirements.

Connie L. Blumen, Natural Resource Lands/Open Space

King County Dept of Natural Resources and Parks

Parks and Recreation Division

201. S. Jackson Street, Suite 700

Seattle, WA 98104

From: [Knowles, Paul](#)
To: [RCO MI Policy Changes \(RCO\)](#)
Cc: [Chase, Doug](#)
Subject: Urban Wildlife Habitat Comments - Spokane County Parks
Date: Wednesday, July 24, 2019 3:38:11 PM
Attachments: [UWH-publiccommentmemo_2019-07-12.pdf](#)

Good Afternoon!

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on RCO's proposed changes to the Urban Wildlife Habitat grant category. Overall, the changes are great (Nice work!). Our comments are as follows:

1. Proposed changes to project area eligibility:

- a. Proximity Qualifier – Supportive of the Working Group's recommendation of keeping the five-mile radius [from UGA] for eligible projects.
- b. Population Qualifier – Supportive of the Working Group's recommendations with two caveats:
 - i. While in the attached document, "urban cluster" is defined, you may want to more clearly define it in subsequent manual updates. The definition provided in p.5 of the attached is not as concise as: "as identified by the United State Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census." Instead, it reads like RCO staff can consider several different options when qualifying a jurisdiction for a grant.
 - ii. Consequently, by opening this category up to smaller jurisdictions, RCO staff may run into additional compliance and implementation issues down the road.

2. Proposed changes to funding split:

- a. Supportive of the Working Group's recommendation to change the formula from 40/40/20 to 45/45/10.

3. Proposed changes to the Evaluation Criteria:

- a. General: Overall supportive of the adjustments to weighting and evaluation criteria.
- b. Question 1 – Ecological and Biological Characteristics
 - i. "Species or Communities with Special Status" has been removed entirely. This should be somehow re-incorporated into this question as it's a good guide for judging a high- quality habitat property vs. low quality. For example, aspen groves aren't threatened or endangered, but they're a critical habitat feature that sustains (or has the potential to) a myriad of species.
 - ii. Describing the "size of populations present" may be difficult if not impossible for most jurisdictions to answer. I'm not sure very many presenters would be able to answer this accurately.
 - iii. The pollinator question (c.) seems like it would provide little value to determining the quality of a project as any property with any habitat will support pollinators. If anything, this should be lumped with (b.). I understand the intent of protecting pollinator habitat, but not sure if this provides any real benefit to the process or outcome.
 - iv. It doesn't appear there's now any question regarding the "viability" of the habitat. If the project expands or connects an existing conserved area, this should be scored and a bonus to the project. An isolated island of "urban" habitat can only support so many species in the long-run...
- c. Question 3 – Public Access and Community Benefits
 - i. Public access – Maybe the active transportation component can include "future potential" to be

connected via bus / bike transportation. When a site is typically outside of a UGA, there are limited options (currently) for active transportation / bus access. Just a thought.

Please let us know if you have any questions! Thank you!

Best Regards,

Paul Knowles

Parks Special Projects Manager

Spokane County Parks, Recreation & Golf

(509) 477-2188 | pknowles@spokanecounty.org

From: [Theodore Holt](#)
To: [Donatelle, Ben \(RCO\)](#); [RCO MI Policy Changes \(RCO\)](#)
Cc: [Tiffany Choe](#)
Subject: Urban Wildlife Habitat, Riparian Protection, and Climate Change
Date: Monday, August 12, 2019 12:00:50 PM

Ben,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's (WWRP) Urban Wildlife Habitat Category, Riparian Protection Category and Climate Change Statement. The Nature Conservancy is supportive of many of the proposed changes, and are grateful for the time and effort staff and workgroups put in to making these proposed changes.

Urban Wildlife Habitat

Project Area Eligibility: Proximity and Population Qualifiers

We are appreciative of the workgroup's thoughtful consideration of alternatives to the proximity and population qualifiers for project area eligibility. We support the goals of the workgroup to increase the number of applications from "local entities"; maintain focus on protecting native habitat, increase habitat connectivity and landscape permeability, and enhance ecosystem services; and increase access to nature-based experiences for underserved communities.

We agree with the workgroup's adoption of "urban clusters" into the definition for project area eligibility, but believe more could be done to increase the number and diversity of applicants. We have been working with partners on identifying climate resilient landscapes and evaluating landscape-scale connectivity (see comments on section d on page 3 of this document). We encourage the board to expand opportunities for applicants from landscapes that have regionally significance for habitat connectivity. To accomplish this, we believe that the definition of an urban area for purposes of this grant program should match the existing Census definition for "urban" as closely as possible. The Census Bureau defines "urban clusters" and "urban areas" as densely settled territories that have 2,500 to 50,000 people, and at least 50,000 people, respectively. Both definitions are based on the density of the population in the immediate vicinity, and a population threshold. We do not see any reason

to depart from the Census Bureau's definition for densely settled urban areas for the purposes of this program, which is intended to protect habitat near densely settled urban areas. A 2,500-person threshold would expand eligibility of this program to projects throughout the State, and specifically to several urban areas within a rural backdrop, which in general are areas that we think are in greatest need of conservation in consideration of the latest trends in changing climate and human development.

Further, we found the workgroup's consideration of growth rate as a qualifier was inspired. While the workgroup ultimately chose not to include growth rate as a qualifier, we would encourage the workgroup to reconsider its decision. To do so would conserve state resources as it will be more cost effective to purchase land within a rapidly urbanizing area rather than once it is urbanized, and it would also allow for projects that might not otherwise happen by waiting for development to occur.

Finally, we note that the workgroup identified increase access to nature-based experiences for underserved communities as a primary goal for this program's review. We recommend the board consider this goal within this context, as there may be opportunities to expand project eligibility to communities that have been underserved.

Planning and Community Support

The proposed evaluation criteria expands the public engagement process to include underserved communities. We are in support of the inclusion of underserved communities during the project selection and design process.

- b. *Describe the public engagement process used to identify this project or habitat as a priority. Specifically, how were local citizens, organizations, underserved communities, and elected officials engaged, and how was their input incorporated into the project selection and design? Describe the support or partnership commitments you have secured for the project.*

We encourage RCO staff to continue refining their programs to elevate the voices of communities who have historically been underserved including indigenous peoples. We would encourage the workgroup and RCO staff to consider additional changes to RCO programs, including composition of evaluation committees and workgroups, to address issues of importance to indigenous people and matters of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Public Access and Community Benefits

The revised scoring criteria provide more weight to public access and community benefits. We agree with this change in emphasis, and would encourage RCO staff to consider similar changes in other WWRP programs.

- b. *How does this project address the needs of communities that historically have been underserved by, or excluded from, opportunities to access nature? Please describe the engagement with these communities and how their input was incorporated into the planning and design of this project.*

We would like to thank the workgroup for incorporating evaluation criteria that reward projects that prioritize underserved communities. In order to assess the effectiveness of implementing this policy, see comments for Planning and Community Support on page 1.

Sincerely, Theo

Theodore Holt, Conservation Transactions Director
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Seattle, WA 98121
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WashingtonNature.org

Attachment C: Statutory Crosswalk

Statutory Consideration	X	Criteria	Detailed Question
(a) For critical habitat and natural areas proposals:			
(i) Multiple benefits for the project;	x	Public Access and Community Benefits	3e
(ii) Whether, and the extent to which, a conservation easement can be used to meet the purposes for the project;	x	Planning and Community Support	2d
(iii) Community support for the project based on input from, but not limited to, local citizens, local organizations, and local elected officials;	x	Planning and Community Support	2b
(iv) The project proposal's ongoing stewardship program that includes estimated costs of maintaining and operating the project including, but not limited to, control of noxious weeds and detrimental invasive species, and that identifies the source of the funds from which the stewardship program will be funded;	X	Management and Stewardship	4a
(v) Recommendations as part of a watershed plan or habitat conservation plan, or a coordinated regionwide prioritization effort, and for projects primarily intended to benefit salmon, limiting factors, or critical pathways analysis;	x	Planning and Community Support	2a
(vi) Immediacy of threat to the site;	x	Planning and Community Support	2c
(vii) Uniqueness of the site;	X	Ecological and Biological Characteristics	1d

(viii) Diversity of species using the site;	X	Ecological and Biological Characteristics	1a
(ix) Quality of the habitat;	x	Ecological and Biological Characteristics	1a
(x) Long-term viability of the site;		Management and Stewardship	4a
(xi) Presence of endangered, threatened, or sensitive species;	x	Ecological and Biological Characteristics	1b
(xii) Enhancement of existing public property;	x	Ecological and Biological Characteristics	1e
(xiii) Consistency with a local land use plan, or a regional or statewide recreational or resource plan, including projects that assist in the implementation of local shoreline master plans updated according to RCW 90.58.080 or local comprehensive plans updated according to RCW 36.70A.130;	x	Planning and Community Support	2a
(xiv) Educational and scientific value of the site;	x	Public Access and Community Benefits	3a
(xv) Integration with recovery efforts for endangered, threatened, or sensitive species;	x	Planning and Community Support	2a
(xvi) The statewide significance of the site.	x	Ecological and Biological Characteristics;	1d&e; 2a

		Planning and Community Support	
(xvii) Habitat benefits for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees.	x	Ecological and Biological Characteristics	1c
(b) For urban wildlife habitat proposals, in addition to the criteria of (a):			
(i) Population of, and distance from, the nearest urban area;	x	Population	6a&b
(ii) Proximity to other wildlife habitat;	x	Ecological and Biological Characteristics	1e
(iii) Potential for public use; and	x	Public Access and Community Benefits	3a&b
(iv) Potential for use by special needs populations.	x	Community engagement/ Public Access	3b

**Recreation and Conservation Funding
Board Resolution 2019-27
Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category**

WHEREAS, the Chapter 79A.15 Revised Code of Washington established the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) and authorized the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) to adopt policies and rules for WWRP; and

WHEREAS, the board directed RCO staff to conduct a programmatic review of the Urban Wildlife Habitat category and make recommendations for necessary changes to program policies and project evaluation criteria that encourage greater participation in the program by local entities; encourage projects that provide greater opportunities for people to access nature-based activities, especially in underserved communities; and encourage projects to consider the potential future impacts of climate change; and

WHEREAS, RCO staff convened a policy workgroup to assist in reviewing and making recommendations to the board that modify policies and evaluation criteria to address the board’s interests and direction; and

WHEREAS, the policy workgroup developed five broad goals for the programmatic review which included protecting native habitat while increasing habitat connectivity, landscape permeability and enhancing ecosystem services; increasing the number of applications from “local entities”; prioritizing projects that provide close-to-home opportunities to experience nature; increasing access to nature-based experiences for underserved communities; and simplifying the evaluation criteria questions; and

WHEREAS, the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), along with the policy workgroup drafted options on how revise the project location policy, the funding allocation policy, and project evaluation to address the above goals and the board selected their preferred options at its meeting in June 2019 for the public to comment on; and

WHEREAS, the preferred options were made available to the public for review and comment from July 15 to August 12, 2019 and RCO solicited comments from over 1,000 members of the public and posted notice on its website, and

WHEREAS, staff reviewed the public comments with the workgroup and made recommendations for options, including a preferred option, in Item 6.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the board adopts the project location policy, the funding allocation policy, and the revised project evaluation criteria as described in Item 6;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the RCO staff is directed to take the necessary steps to implement these revisions beginning with the 2020 grant cycle; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the RCO is encouraged to evaluate whether the approved changes are achieving the desired effect after the 2022 grant cycle.

Resolution moved by: _____

Resolution seconded _____

by: Adopted Date: _____

Redefining Urban Areas following the 2020 Census

December 22, 2022

Written by: Michael Ratcliffe, U.S. Census Bureau Geography Division

“Urban” and “rural” are terms that bring to mind specific kinds of landscapes—densely developed areas in the case of urban, and small towns, farms and open spaces in the case of rural. While we can all think of specific areas in each category, it’s important to have a consistent measure to define these areas in order to produce meaningful data.

After each decennial census, the U.S. Census Bureau redefines both areas, providing an important baseline for analyzing the distribution and characteristics of urban and rural populations and economic activity. We periodically review the criteria defining urban and rural areas to make sure the distinctions continue to be relevant for analysis, planning and decision making. We do this by publishing Federal Register Notices – first to gather feedback

[<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/02/19/2021-03412/urban-areas-for-the-2020-census-proposed-criteria>] and then to notify the public of the changes in criteria

[<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/03/24/2022-06180/urban-area-criteria-for-the-2020-census-final-criteria>].

In this post, we discuss several key changes to the urban area criteria we have made by incorporating learnings from analysis of 2010 Census urban areas, changes in settlement patterns, and discussions with users of our urban and rural classification.

Following the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau defined two types of urban areas:

- Urbanized areas with a population of 50,000 or more.
- Urban clusters with at least 2,500 but fewer than 50,000 people.

Both areas were defined based on population density measured at the census tract and block levels. We used two population density thresholds in the delineation process: 1,000 people per square mile when delineating the initial urban core and then 500 people per square mile to finish out the delineation as we moved outward through suburban territory to the edge of the urban area.

In 2010, nearly 81% of the U.S. population was urban and approximately 19% was rural. When using the same definitions from 2010, the 2016-2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates show the same percentages at the national level.

Table 1. Population in Urban and Rural Areas, 2010 Census and 2016-2020 ACS.

	2010 Census Population	2010 Percent	2020 ACS 5-year Estimates Population *	2020 Percent
Total	308,745,538	100.0	326,569,308	100.00
Urban	249,253,271	80.7	263,366,402	80.7
Urbanized Area	219,922,123	71.2	233,777,857	71.6
Urban Cluster	29,331,148	9.5	29,588,545	9.1
Rural	59,492,267	19.3	63,202,906	19.3

Sources: 2010 Census; 2016-2020 ACS 5-year data.

2020 Census Urban Area Criteria

After the 2020 Census, there are three key changes to the Census Bureau’s urban area concept and criteria:

- We increased the minimum population threshold to qualify as urban from 2,500 to 5,000, and we added an alternative: instead of qualifying based on population size, areas can now qualify based on a minimum housing unit threshold.
- We now use housing unit density instead of population density.
- We no longer distinguish between different types of urban areas.

The first two changes reflect a general shift by the Census Bureau toward using housing units to measure urbanization and identify qualifying urban areas. Each of these criteria changes is described more below.

Minimum Population Threshold or Housing Unit Qualification

With the new criteria, to qualify as urban, an area must encompass at least 5,000 people or at least 2,000 housing units. The minimum number of people is an increase from the former threshold of 2,500 people, which had been used since 1910. We chose 2,000 housing units as the alternative threshold because it's consistent with the 5,000 people threshold. Specifically, if you multiple 2,000 by 2.5 (the nationwide average of people per housing unit) it also equals 5,000.

This “either/or” approach has two benefits:

- Areas, such as seasonal communities or second-home communities, that are densely developed but have a lower population on Census Day (April 1) can qualify as urban based on the number of housing units.
- Areas that have higher than average people per housing unit ratios can qualify based on population.

Although the federal government does not have a standard definition of urban or rural, the Census Bureau’s classification often provides a baseline set of areas. Previously, other federal agencies applied higher population thresholds that aligned with their specific program needs. The Census Bureau’s previous threshold of 2,500 people was the lowest in use and, over the years, data users and analysts have questioned the continued validity of the 2,500-person threshold and asked if the Census Bureau would consider an increase.

If we apply the new population threshold criteria to the same 2016-2020 ACS 5-year estimates used in Table 1 above, this change would mean approximately 1,000 areas would shift from urban to rural status. These areas contain an estimated 3.5 million people. Using the new criteria, there will be about a 1 percentage point change – a slight decrease in the urban population and a slight increase in the rural population.

Table 2 applies the new minimum thresholds to the 2010 Census and 2016-2020 ACS 5-year estimates populations.

Table 2. Population in Urban and Rural Areas, 2010 Census and 2016-2020 ACS, Applying 2020 Thresholds.

	2010 Census Population	2010 Percent	2016-2020 ACS 5-year Estimates Population*	2020 Percent
Total	308,745,538	100.0	326,569,308	100.00
Urban	245,658,565	79.6	259,850,930	79.6
Rural	63,086,973	20.4	66,718,378	20.4

Source: 2010 Census; 2016-2020 ACS 5-year data.

Housing Unit Density Instead of Population Density

The second change is that we're defining urban areas based on housing unit density measured at the census block level, instead of population density. Housing density provides a more direct measure of the densely developed landscape. The number of individuals in housing units can change over time, but the presence of housing on the landscape remains more stable.

Three density thresholds are used in the delineation process:

- 425 housing units per square mile define the initial urban core.
- Then 200 units per square mile fill in the remainder of the urban area, which is similar to the 2000 and 2010 censuses.
- 1,275 housing units per square mile ensures each qualifying urban area contains at least one high density nucleus.

The use of housing unit density also provides the ability to update urban areas between censuses. This is especially important in faster growing areas of the nation. Population counts at the census block level are available only from the once-a-decade census, so when population density at the block level is the primary measure of urbanization, we are limited to delineating urban areas only once every 10 years. We can use data in our Master Address File, a continuously updated, nationwide file of addresses with associated status codes and geographic information, to update urbanization on a more frequent basis when housing unit density is used as the primary urbanization measure. We haven't made specific plans to do so, but we now have the ability.

No Longer Distinguishing Between Urbanized Areas and Urban Clusters

The third change was our decision to cease distinguishing between different types of urban areas based on size of population above or below 50,000 people. We no longer label areas as either urbanized areas or urban clusters. All areas, regardless of population size, are simply called “urban areas.”

When we consider economic data for urban areas on either side of the 50,000-person threshold – areas of 49,000 to 51,000 – we see similarities in terms of economic activity (Table 3). Looking at numbers of firms and retail sales, the 50,000-person threshold does not appear to be a significant divide. For example, as shown in Table 3 below, the Danville, VA., area had higher retail sales in 2012 than two of the three areas above 50,000—New Bern, NC, and Pascagoula, MS. Also, in terms of per capita retail sales, Roswell, NM, with a population just below 50,000, did not differ much from New Bern, which had a population just over 50,000 in 2020. This suggests that when analyzing urban areas, we should also consider the market region surrounding the area; that is, the economic reach of the urban area into the surrounding rural area and not limit our attention only to the urban area.

We will continue to publish population counts for urban areas. It will still be possible for data users and agencies to identify and distinguish areas based on various sizes of population. As we have stated previously, we are committed to working with stakeholders and agencies to promote understanding of our classification.

Table 3. Economic Data for Urban Areas with Populations Between 49,000 and 51,000

Urban Area	2010 Census Population	Number of Firms	Population to Firm Ratio	Retail Sales
New Bern, N.C.	50,503	3,994	12.6	\$880,434,000
Grand Island, Neb.	50,400	4,366	11.6	\$1,198,923,000
Pascagoula, Miss.	50,428	4,083	12.4	\$851,756,000
Roswell, N.M.	49,727	3,317	15.0	\$863,103,000
Danville, Va.	49,344	3,314	14.9	\$985,919,000

Source: 2010 Census; 2012 Survey of Business Owners; 2012 Economic Census

Note: Data for each urban area are based on the author’s aggregation of data for places located within the urban area (Economic Census data are not tabulated for urban areas).

The Census Bureau will announce urban areas based on the 2020 Census by the end of the year.

Go to Urban and Rural

[<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>] for more information on this topic. To learn about the history of the Census Bureau’s urban-rural classification, go to “A Century of Delineating a Changing Landscape

[https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/ua/Century_of_Defining_Urban.pdf] .”

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This article was filed under:

Housing [[/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings.html?text-list-cfab77f3a8:filters=Census:Topic/Housing](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings.html?text-list-cfab77f3a8:filters=Census:Topic/Housing)]

Population Estimates [[/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings.html?text-list-cfab77f3a8:filters=Census:Topic/ThePopulation/Population-estimates](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings.html?text-list-cfab77f3a8:filters=Census:Topic/ThePopulation/Population-estimates)]

Retail Sales [[/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings.html?text-list-cfab77f3a8:filters=Census:Topic/Industry/Retail-sales](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings.html?text-list-cfab77f3a8:filters=Census:Topic/Industry/Retail-sales)]

◀ Previous

Disclosure Avoidance Protections for the American Community Survey
[<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2022/12/disclosure-avoidance-protections-acps.html>]

Next ▶

Changing Small Habits Can Lead to Transformation
[<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2023/02/changing-small-habits-transformation.html>]

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Decision Memo

APPROVED BY RCO DIRECTOR MEGAN DUFFY

Meeting Date: January 29, 2025

Title: Policy Waiver Request: Pre-agreement Cost for California Creek Estuary Park, 18-1945

Prepared By: Rachelle Lim, Outdoor Grants Manager

Summary

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board policy limits eligible acquisition pre-agreement costs to administration and a subset of incidental costs. The Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District 2 is asking the board to waive the policy and approve reimbursement of a \$50,000 land payment as an eligible pre-agreement cost for the California Creek Estuary Park project.

Board Action Requested

This item will be a: Request for Decision
 Request for Direction
 Briefing

Resolution: 2025-02

Purpose of Resolution: Approve reimbursement of the Park District's land payment as an eligible pre-agreement cost.

Background

During the 2018 grant cycle, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board awarded a \$458,000 Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant and a matching \$366,400 Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Water Access Category grant to the Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation Park District 2 to increase access to water-based public recreation and protect rare tideland and shoreline habitat in northwest Whatcom County. The original scope of the California Creek Estuary Park (18-1945) project included the acquisition of thirteen acres of shoreline property at the confluence of California Creek and Drayton Harbor and development of a parking lot. The parking lot was merged into a second phased project to more efficiently facilitate permitting and construction.

Project Status

The agreement start date was July 1, 2019, and the Park District has completed the acquisition of two properties, 4656 Drayton Harbor Road (twelve and a half acres) and 4677 Drayton Harbor Road (approximately one acre). This request relates to the 4677 property only. Map shown in Attachment B.

Background on 4677 Drayton Harbor Road Purchase

The Park District purchased the 4677 Drayton Harbor Road property from Whatcom Land Trust on November 12, 2020. Because the Park District did not have the resources to buy the property outright, the Land Trust stepped in and purchased the property for \$350,000 on December 16, 2018, to secure it from potential development as a developer also put an offer on the property.

To help ensure protection of the site for public recreation and conservation in perpetuity, the Park District and Land Trust signed a letter of intent on March 14, 2019. The letter stated their intentions to partner on the acquisition, such that the Park District would contribute \$50,000 towards the purchase of the property, with the goal of acquiring it from the Land Trust within three years, provided that the remaining \$300,000 could be raised or secured with grant funding. If the funding could not be raised, the Land Trust would sell the property and pay back the district's \$50,000 contribution.

The Park District paid \$50,000 to the Land Trust on March 31, 2019, three months prior to the RCO agreement start date of July 1, 2019. The district did not request a Waiver of Retroactivity because they were not taking title to the property at that time. Rather, they were planning to wait until they secured a grant. The district did not realize that a waiver was required to maintain eligibility of their contribution since they were simply making what was considered a fully refundable earnest money payment.

With the approved 2018 ALEA and WWRP Water Access grants, the district now had the funds needed to purchase the property from the Land Trust and closed on that transaction in November 2020. The reviewed appraised value of the property was \$364,000. The Land Trust donated \$14,000 towards the value of the property, and the amended purchase and sale agreement between the District and Land Trust listed the purchase price as \$350,000, the same amount the Land Trust paid for the property in 2018. The District's Buyer's/Final Settlement Statement from Whatcom Land Title Company shows that the \$50,000 contribution was applied towards the property's total purchase price of \$350,000, with the remaining \$300,000 to be paid by the district at closing.

The Park District has billed the grant for \$300,000 in land costs for the 4677 Drayton Harbor Road acquisition but has not billed for the \$50,000 payment to the Land Trust. Reimbursement of the \$50,000, which was paid prior to the agreement start date but applied towards the review appraised value of the property when it closed during the grant performance period, would make the Park District whole on this acquisition.

Existing Policy and Analysis

Land costs are not eligible as pre-agreement costs based on the policy outlined in [Manual 3, Acquisition Policies](#), which limits pre-agreement costs to administration costs and a subset of incidental costs.

Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 286-13-085, *Retroactive, Pre-agreement, and Increased Costs* makes it clear that the board defines eligible pre-agreement costs. Per WAC 286-13-085 Section (4), "The only retroactive acquisition, development, and restoration costs eligible for grant funding are preagreement [sic] costs as defined by the board." WAC 286-13-085 Section (3) specifies that RCO's director may grant a waiver of retroactivity for acquiring real property in advance of the grant agreement.

Analysis

Because the District planned to purchase the property during the grant performance period, they did not pursue approval of a waiver of retroactivity. The process, as described in *Manual 3, Acquisition Projects*, allows a project sponsor to get advance approval in writing from the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to purchase a property and preserve the eligibility of land acquisition costs incurred before execution of a grant agreement. While a waiver was an acceptable option, the sponsor simply did not consider this option because the payment made would not result in ownership of the property.

Options Considered

When the Park District learned that their \$50,000 contribution did not meet the requirements for reimbursement, they discussed these options with RCO staff.

Option 1. Ask the board for a policy waiver to allow the Park District's \$50,000 land cost contribution to be considered an eligible pre-agreement cost. This action would permit reimbursement of the Park Districts' payment from March 2018 that was paid toward the reviewed appraised value of the property.

Option 2. Ask the Land Trust to return the \$50,000 contribution. The Park District would then pay the Land Trust during the agreement performance period. Technically, the expenditure would be eligible for reimbursement. While this

option was discussed, it could lead to confusion during future audits and set an unfortunate precedent for re-doing transactions solely to get around program policies.

Option 3. Do nothing. Under this option, the Park District would have to absorb the additional \$50,000 expense.

Following the discussion, the Park District selected Option 1 and submitted a policy waiver request. Staff supports this option for the following reasons:

- When the Land Trust stepped in to secure the property on behalf of the district, the \$50,000 helped to solidify and reassure the Land Trust of the district's commitment to purchasing and protecting this property for public purposes.
- The district's contribution only became a land cost when the property was purchased during the grant performance period. Per the letter of intent signed by the District and the Land Trust, the contribution would have been returned to the district if grant funding had not been secured and the property not purchased.
- The \$50,000 or 13.7 percent contribution represents a significant portion of the reviewed appraised value (\$364,000) of the property.
- The Park District, which has a population of 16,000, is predominately rural with most residents in the neighborhoods of Blaine, Birch Bay, and outlying urban growth areas. The district is considered a "community in need" in Washington state, which qualifies it for a reduced match.

This is an unusual request; however, the district has limited resources and is hopeful that a favorable response to their request will help them in their efforts to move forward with closing the acquisition phase of the project and to move on to developing the public access amenities. See the California Creek Estuary Park Phase 2 ([20-1841](#)) project snapshot.

Similar Board Decisions

When the Legislature delayed approving the state capital budget for the 2017-19 biennium, the board responded to support project applicants. To mitigate the challenge this created for applicants who were waiting to implement projects, in September 2017, the board approved Resolution 2017-29. This resolution expanded the eligible pre-agreement costs for 2016 development and restoration projects to include all eligible costs as outlined in *Manual 4, Development Projects* and *Manual 5, Restoration Projects*.

That decision differs from the current request because it focused on different project types and was implemented through a special waiver of retroactivity. As part of that action, the board updated the standard list of eligible pre-agreement costs for all development and restoration projects; however, there were no updates to pre-agreement costs for acquisitions.

RCO staff are engaged in an effort to review and request board approval of updates to some acquisition policies. This will include reviewing eligible pre-agreement costs and assessing whether earnest money or similar payments like the one described in this memorandum should be added as an eligible pre-agreement cost.

Available Funds

Because the parking lot and related development costs were removed from the agreement, there are enough funds remaining for reimbursement of the grant share (\$45,000) of the \$50,000 contribution.

Strategic Plan Link

Consideration of this request supports the board's goal of helping its partners protect, restore, and develop habitat, working lands, and recreation opportunities that benefit people, fish and wildlife, and ecosystems

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of this policy waiver to allow the Park District's \$50,000 land cost contribution to be considered an eligible pre-agreement cost. This action would permit a cost to be reimbursed that was paid toward the review appraised value of the property when it closed during the grant performance period.

Attachments

- A. Resolution 2025 – 02, *Approve the Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District 2's Land Cost Contribution as an Eligible Pre-agreement Cost*
- B. Map of Acquired Properties (Deed of Right Exhibit B)

**Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
Resolution 2025-02
Approve the Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District 2's Land Cost
Contribution as an Eligible Pre-agreement Cost for the California Creek Estuary
Park, Project 18-1945**

WHEREAS Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 286-13-085 authorizes the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to define eligible retroactive acquisition, development, and restoration costs; and

WHEREAS Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District 2 purchased the 4677 Drayton Harbor Road property for public recreation and shoreline habitat conservation during the grant performance period from Whatcom Land Trust; and

WHEREAS per a letter of intent to acquire the property signed in March 2019, the Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District 2 made a \$50,000 contribution to the Whatcom Land Trust prior to the agreement start date; and

WHEREAS the contribution was applied towards the reviewed appraised value of the property as part of the purchase when it closed during the grant agreement performance period; and

WHEREAS the Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District 2 is asking the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to waive the limitations on pre-agreement acquisition costs and expand it to include this one-time payment for the 4677 Drayton Harbor Road property; and

WHEREAS approval of this waiver request supports the board's goal to help partners protect, restore, and develop habitat and recreation opportunities that benefit people, wildlife, and ecosystems;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the board approves this one-time \$50,000 payment as an eligible pre-agreement acquisition cost and directs staff to process the reimbursement request upon receipt of all required documentation.

Resolution moved by: _____

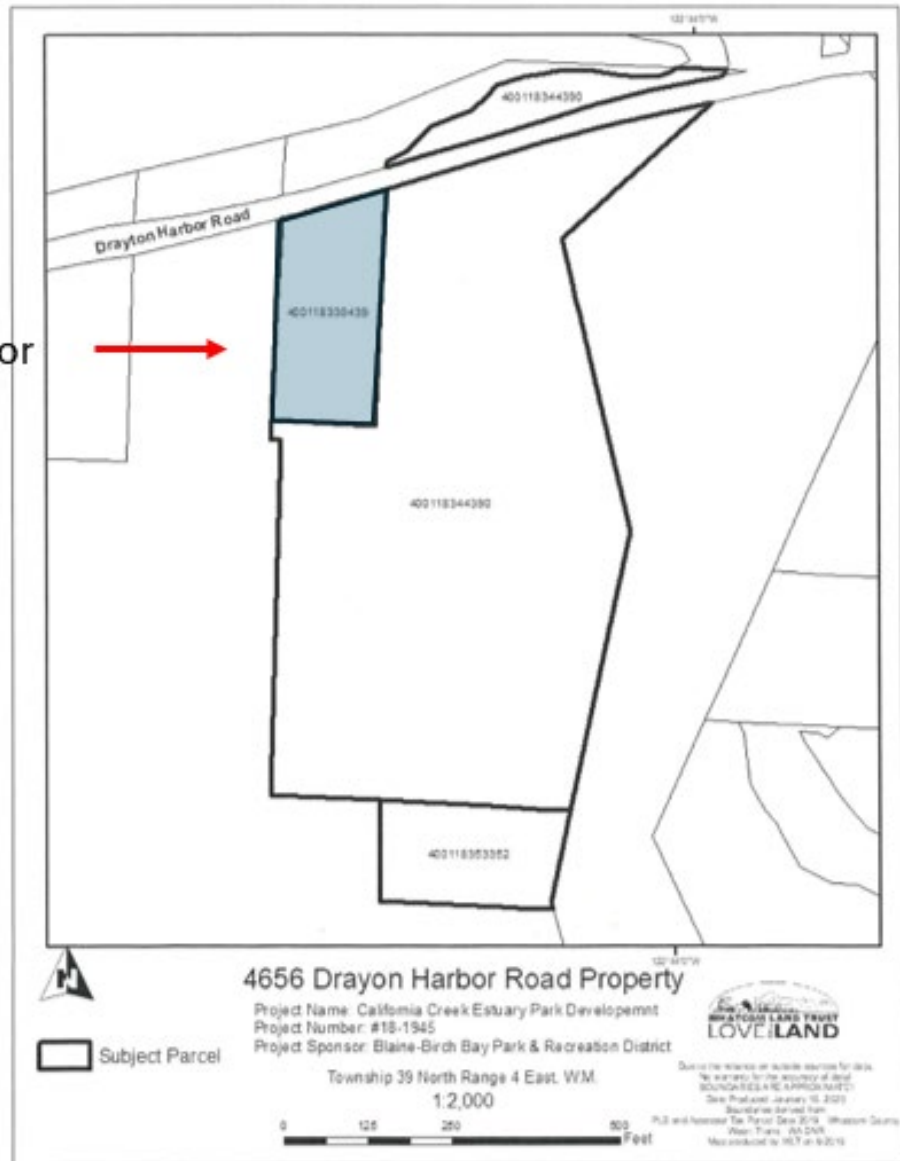
Resolution seconded by: _____

Adopted/Defeated/Deferred (underline one)

Date: _____

Map of Acquired Properties (Deed of Right Exhibit B)

4677 Drayton Harbor



Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Decision Memo

APPROVED BY RCO DIRECTOR MEGAN DUFFY

Meeting Date: January 29, 2025

Title: Eligibility for Acquisition: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Sol Duc River Access, 22-1734

Prepared By: Marguerite Austin, Section Manager

Summary

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is asking the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to waive a policy that prohibits acquisition of land already managed for public outdoor recreation. Waiving the policy would allow WDFW to buy a new access site on the popular Sol Duc River.

Board Action Requested

This item will be a:

- Request for Decision
- Request for Direction
- Briefing

Resolution: 2025-03

Purpose of Resolution: Approve purchase of the Sol Duc River Access site as eligible for grant funding.

Background

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) awarded a Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Water Access Category grant to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to buy twenty-five acres along the Sol Duc River for an access site ([22-1734](#)). This access site will replace a popular non-motorized boating site north of Forks in Clallam County. The proposed property contains old-growth trees, more than a half mile of waterfront, an opening on the south end with a natural boat launch, and a partially cleared area that was previously used for tent and trailer camping. Maps and aerial views of the property are shown in attachment B.

The headwaters of the Sol Duc River are in the Olympic Mountains. The river flows southwest across the Olympic Peninsula through a spectacularly scenic area of the state. This river is classified as one of the best fly-fishing waters in the state, attracting anglers

from all over to fish for the world-famous Sol Duc Wild steelhead. The river has five Pacific salmon species: chum, coho, pink, sockeye, and Chinook.

The Sol Duc Hatchery, which is about eleven miles from the proposed access site, releases 1,140,000 Chinook, 100,000 summer Coho, and 500,000 fall Coho with thousands of returning fish each season.

For many years, WDFW managed the Whitcomb-Diimmel Road access, which is across and upriver from the proposed site. Storms and flooding in 2021 and 2022 destroyed that access. Within a few weeks after the site destruction, WDFW began looking for a replacement. Finding a suitable property and not wanting to lose an opportunity for the public to safely access the Sol Duc River, WDFW leased the site from a private landowner and applied for a Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grant for the 2023-2025 biennium.

The leased site is in a sixteen-mile stretch from WDFW's Maxfield Road launch and the next public access site at Leyendecker Park southwest of Forks where a boat can be retrieved. This distance is not easily navigated and is challenging for even the most experienced boaters. The long distance without a take-out point is concerning for recreational boaters, enforcement officers, and scientists because the distance increases risks, negatively affects response time, and could potentially reduce survival and successful emergency response efforts.

WDFW provided access through the lease, which expires December 31, 2024. Perpetually extending the lease is not financially feasible and not of interest to the property owner. When entering into the lease agreement, WDFW did not realize that leasing the property would jeopardize its eligibility for funding.

Following discussions with Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff regarding the eligibility issue, WDFW realized the challenge and submitted a request to ask the board to grant a waiver allowing the agency to move forward with purchasing this property.

If WDFW is successful in acquiring the Sol Duc property, they plan to install an access gate and informational kiosk. The site has a paved approach from Highway 101, a well-established gravel road with parking for several vehicles, and a natural low bank gravel loading area and launch. It has over a thousand feet of river bar for bank fishing. WDFW will provide portable restrooms until they determine the need for a more permanent structure.

Board Policy

After careful review of board policies outlined in [Manual 3, Acquisition Policies](#), staff has determined that acquisition of the Sold Duc River Access property is not eligible for funding assistance. The policy states that ineligible projects include “established outdoor recreation areas developed under ownership or management of a public agency.” This means if a sponsor leases a site for public recreation, it is considered under management of a public agency.

Board policy for acquisition of existing public property says: “In general, property that already is under public ownership or management is not eligible for RCO grant funding.” The one exception to the policy is that the sponsor must satisfy the following conditions:

- State law requires that the agency selling the land must receive compensation.
- The land was not originally acquired by the selling agency for habitat conservation (for habitat conservation proposals), salmon habitat recovery (for salmon habitat recovery proposals), or recreation use (for outdoor recreation proposals).
- The land has never been publicly managed for habitat conservation (for habitat conservation proposals), salmon habitat recovery (for salmon habitat recovery proposals), or recreation (for outdoor recreation proposals).

The WDFW plans to purchase property from a private entity, so the first two conditions do not apply. The last one does apply since the agency has leased and managed the Sol Duc River property as a public recreational access site since June 2022.

Analysis

Within a few weeks after learning the Whitcomb-Diimmel site was destroyed, the WDFW took immediate action and began looking for a replacement site. Having found a suitable property and not wanting to lose an opportunity for the public to safely access the Sol Duc River, the agency executed a lease agreement with the private landowner and applied for a WWRP grant for the 2023-25 biennium

When preparing the grant agreement, following board approval of a grant award in 2023, RCO staff learned that there was an encumbrance on the property that needed to be cleared before the property would be ready for purchase. WDFW began working on and eventually secured the funds needed to clear that encumbrance. With that action completed, attention focused on WDFW’s goal to purchase the property by the end of 2024. While reviewing required acquisition documents, RCO staff realized there was a

lease on the site and notified WDFW of the board's policy regarding purchase of land under management of a public agency. After discussing options, WDFW decided to ask the board to waive the policy cited above so it can use its Water Access Category grant to purchase the twenty-five-acre site.

When considering this request, staff believes approval would allow WDFW to purchase a critical property for public recreational use. The property is privately owned and WDFW has completed all steps needed to secure the property quickly and minimize the timeframe when the public would not have access to this launch and retrieval site.

Similar Decisions by the Board

There are several examples of the board approving similar requests.

- In July 2024, the board waived this policy and gave the City of Kent approval to apply for a grant to buy land it had been leasing from Union Pacific Railroad. The City had managed the site for public recreation since the 1990s.
- In April 2024, the board waived this policy to allow the City of Medical Lake to pursue grant funds to buy Waterfront Park from the Department of Social and Health Services. The City had leased and managed the property as a park since 1967.
- In 2014, the board waived this policy to allow the City of Edmonds to pursue grant funds to buy Civic Center Field from the Edmonds School District. The city had leased and managed the property as a park since 1977.
- In 2012, the board waived this policy to allow the City of Vancouver to acquire John Ball Park when the Vancouver School District announced its intention to sell the property for development. The City began leasing the property for outdoor recreational purposes in 1959.
- In 2000, the board waived this policy to allow the City of Edmonds to acquire Marina Beach when the private landowner announced their intention to sell the property for development. The city had leased and managed the extremely popular Marina Beach Park for many years.

In the three latter instances, the cities successfully secured Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grants to acquire and protect these properties for public outdoor recreation. Grant applications for the City of Medical Lake and the City of Kent were evaluated and ranked and are included in the board-approved preliminary ranked list for the current 2024 grant round. The board will make funding decisions on these two projects in June.

Strategic Plan Link

Consideration of this request supports the board's goal of helping its partners protect, restore, and develop habitat, working lands, and recreation opportunities that benefit people, fish and wildlife, and ecosystems.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of this policy waiver to buy of the Sol Duc River Access property. This action would give WDFW authority to purchase the site using the approved grant.

Attachments

- A. Resolution 2025-03, *Approve the Eligibility of the Sol Duc River Access Property*
- B. Location Maps and Aerial Views of the Sol Duc River Access Property

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
Resolution 2025-03
Approve the Eligibility of the Sol Duc River Access Property

WHEREAS for the past year and a half, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has leased the Sol Duc River Access property from a private landowner for a river access site; and

WHEREAS WDFW has managed and maintained it for public outdoor recreational use; and

WHEREAS continuing to lease the property would be cost-prohibitive and the landowner wants to sell; and

WHEREAS WDFW wishes to retain this valuable recreation area for public use by purchasing and protecting it in perpetuity; and

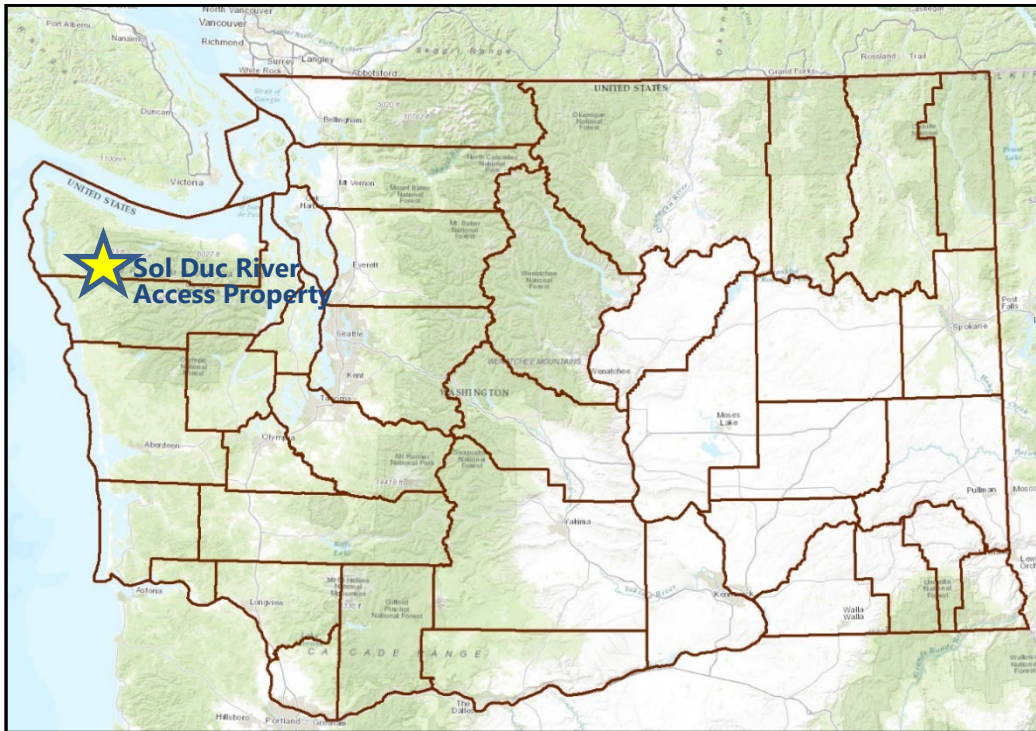
WHEREAS WDFW is asking the board to waive the policy that limits the eligibility of a site that has been publicly managed for outdoor recreation; and

WHEREAS approval of this waiver request supports the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board's goal to help partners protect, restore, and develop habitat and recreation opportunities that benefit people, wildlife, and ecosystems;

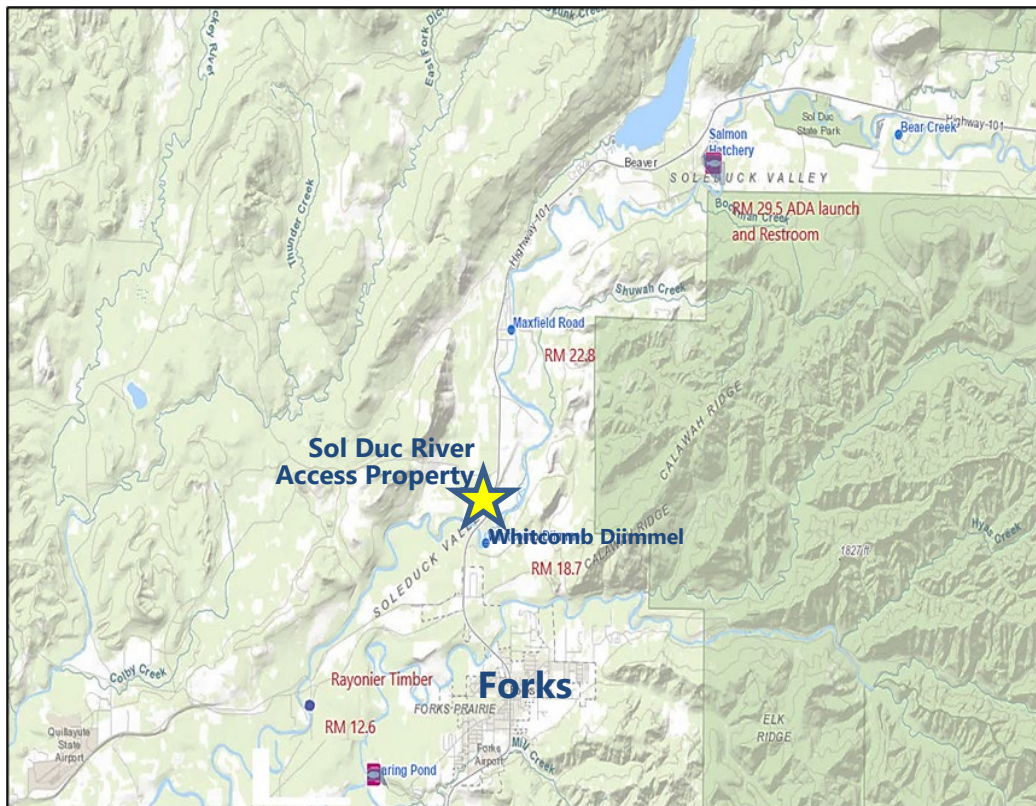
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the board hereby approves the eligibility of the Sol Duc River Access property for acquisition assistance.

<i>Resolution moved by:</i>	
<i>Resolution seconded by:</i>	
<i>Adopted/Defeated/Deferred (underline one)</i>	
<i>Date:</i>	

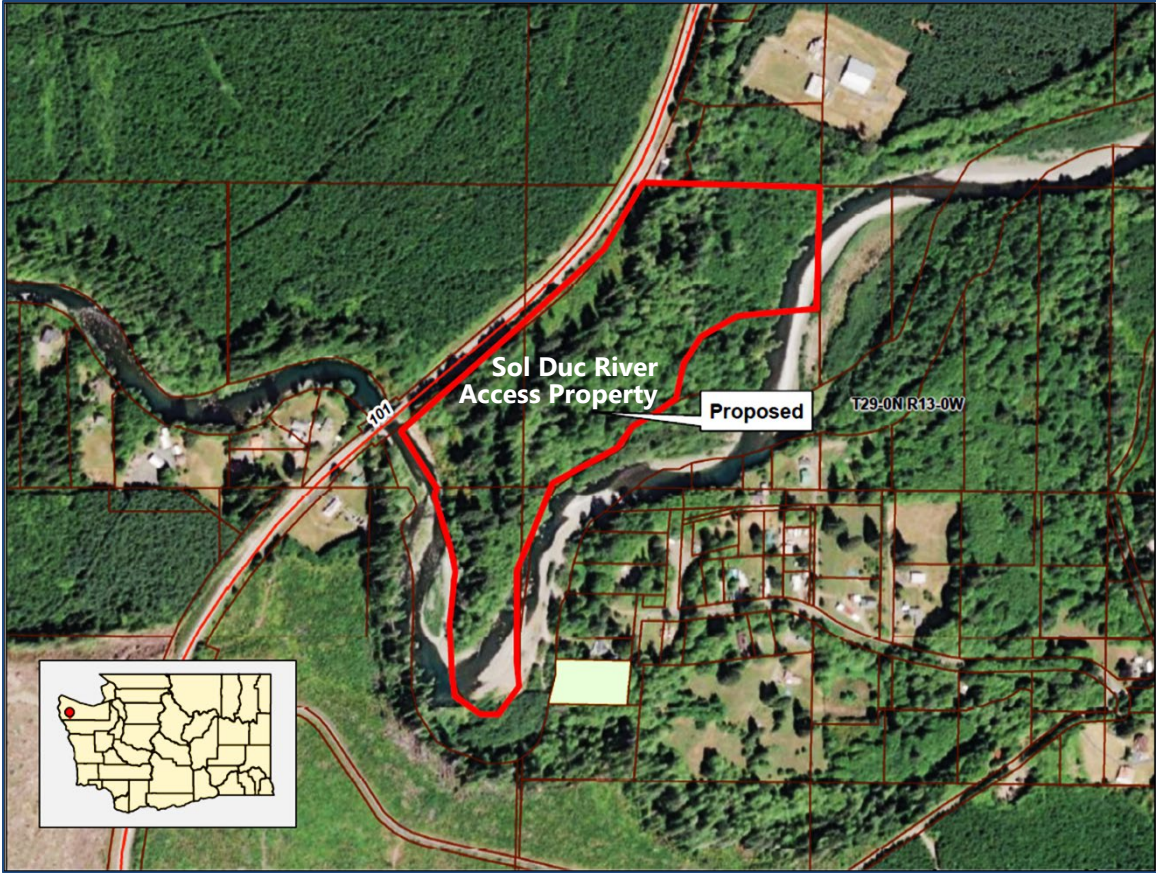
Location Maps and Aerial Views of the Sol Duc River Access Property



Regional Location Map



Site Location Map



Parcel Map



Aerial View of Access Area

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Decision Memo

APPROVED BY RCO DIRECTOR MEGAN DUFFY

Meeting Date: January 29, 2024

Title: Acquisition Policy Changes

Prepared By: Nicholas Norton, Policy and Planning Specialist

Summary

This memo summarizes options and Recreation and Conservation Office staff recommendations for three potential acquisition policy changes. These changes relate to eligibility of property under existing public ownership or management, combination project timeline requirements, and eligibility of earnest or option payments. Staff is seeking Recreation and Conservation Funding Board direction on preferred options.

Board Action Requested

This item will be a:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Request for Decision
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Request for Direction
<input type="checkbox"/>	Briefing

Acquisition Policy 1: Existing Public Property

Currently, *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects* provides guidance regarding the acquisition of public property under existing public ownership or management. In short, these types of acquisitions are prohibited unless: 1) state law requires compensation, 2) the land was not originally acquired for recreation or conservation purposes, and 3) the land has not been managed for recreation or conservation purposes. The complete relevant language can be found in Attachment A.

At the April 2024 and July 2024 Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) meetings, the board approved requests to waive aspects of this policy to allow eligible entities to propose acquisition projects for funding consideration. As a result of these discussions, the board requested that the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff examine existing policies and bring alternate options for consideration.

Past Policies

The core of the policies related to the acquisition of public property has existed since the initial development of an acquisitions-specific manual at RCO over forty years ago.

As with many early policies, this policy models federal restrictions on the acquisition of public lands in the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Though the specific policy language has changed to provide additional clarity, the core impact and intent of these policies has remained the same. These policies ensure that RCO investments provide new, additional acreage for recreation and conservation beyond what is already available.

Past & Current Decisions by the Board

In this meeting (Item 12), the board is being asked to waive acquisition policy to allow the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to purchase property on the Sol Duc River from a private landowner using funds already secured from RCO. WDFW has leased the property since June 2022 to provide access to the public for recreational boating, but perpetually extending the lease is not financially feasible and not of interest to the property owner.

In July 2024, the board waived acquisition policy to allow the City of Kent to pursue grant funds to purchase the Uplands Extension property from the Union Pacific Railroad. The city had leased and managed the property for recreation since the 1990s. The lease rate was set to increase dramatically, putting the recreation opportunities at risk if the city was unable to buy the property.

In April 2024, the board waived acquisition policy, allowing the City of Medical Lake to pursue grant funds to purchase Waterfront Park from the Department of Social and Health Services. The park had received multiple RCO development grants, and the city had leased and managed the property as a park since 1967. The lease rate was set to increase dramatically, making the city unable to continue management for recreation.

In 2014, the board waived this policy to allow the City of Edmonds to pursue grant funds to purchase Civic Center Field from the Edmonds School District. The city had leased and managed the property as a park since 1977. The school district intended to sell the property to a suitable buyer at fair market value pursuant to RCW 39.33.

In 2012, the board waived acquisition policy, allowing the City of Vancouver to acquire John Ball Park from the Vancouver School District. The city began leasing the property for outdoor recreational purposes in 1959 but was unable to negotiate a lease extension when the school district announced its intention to sell the property for development.

In 2000, the board waived this policy to allow the City of Edmonds to acquire Marina Beach when the private landowner announced their intention to sell the property for

development. The city had leased and managed the extremely popular Marina Beach Park for many years.

In the three latter instances, the cities successfully secured Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) grants to acquire and protect these properties for public outdoor recreation. Grant applications for the City of Medical Lake and the City of Kent are included in the current 2024 grant round, and funding for the Sol Duc acquisition was previously awarded through a WWRP Water Access grant.

Options for Acquisition Policy 1

Option 1: No Change

Option 1 would be to make no changes to existing policies regarding the acquisition of property under existing public ownership or management. In this scenario, any requested waivers of current policy would come to the board for decisions on a case-by-case basis. Some pros and cons for this option are as follows:

Pros	Cons
Maintains a clear standard whereby state funding is only used for additional acreage in protected status.	Does not accommodate situations where a current recreation opportunity may be at risk of loss through management change.
Ensures any proposed waivers of policy are discussed and decided in a public process by multiple decision makers.	Does not consider the potential public benefits of transitioning from a leasehold interest to fee-title interest (i.e., establishing full site control).
	Waiving current policy can take months and significant effort from local partners, which could limit the ability to take advantage of time-sensitive opportunities.
	Local communities may not have equal capacity to request a waiver at the board level or knowledge that the board can waive this policy. This creates a source of inequity.

Option 2: Director Delegation

Option 2 would be to maintain the current policy standards regarding the acquisition of property under existing public ownership or management but authorizes the RCO director to waive specific provisions when a current public benefit is at a credible threat

of loss. Specific proposed edits for this option can be found in Attachment B. Some pros and cons for this option are as follows:

Pros	Cons
Accommodates situations where a current opportunity may be at risk of loss.	Does not accommodate projects where there is no threat, but establishing full site control would bring clear public benefits.
Reduces the time and effort required to request a waiver of existing policy.	

Option 3: Remove Management Consideration

Option 3 would be to remove current and past management as an eligibility consideration for acquisition projects. More specifically, even if the property was leased by a public entity for established outdoor recreation, habitat conservation, and/or salmon recovery purposes, it could remain eligible for acquisition from the underlying private landowner. In addition, a public property under management for outdoor recreation, habitat conservation, and/or salmon recovery purposes would be eligible if it required compensation and was not originally acquired for those purposes. Specific proposed edits for this option can be found in Attachment C. Some pros and cons for this option are as follows:

Pros	Cons
Accommodates projects where there is no threat, but establishing full site control would bring clear public benefits.	Would allow entities to propose acquisition projects that don't provide new recreational, conservation, or recovery opportunities or acreage.
Accommodates situations where a current opportunity may be at risk of loss.	May increase interest and demand among programs that are already highly competitive.
Supports consistent decision-making by reducing the potential for waiver requests on a case-by-case basis.	

May increase interest and demand among programs that have been historically less competitive.

Aligns with past waiver decisions made by the board.

Acquisition Policy 2: Combination Project Timeline

Policies meant to increase the likelihood of success and timeliness of combination projects were first introduced by the board in 1999. For acquisition components of a combination project, the property must be secured via acquisition, be in escrow, or an option obtained at least one month prior to the board meeting where funding is approved.

In 2000, this policy was expanded to include a requirement that the acquisition component must be closed or executed within ninety days of the board funding meeting. In 2010, this ninety-day requirement was expanded to eighteen months for Salmon Recovery Funding Board projects.

Historically, unless the property was acquired under a waiver, sponsor organizations have struggled to meet this ninety-day requirement, given the complex logistics and due diligence requirements associated with either a fee-title or conservation easement acquisition. Increasingly, important steps such as appraisals and appraisal review are taking much longer, which puts even further strain on this timeline. RCO staff recommends extending this ninety-day timeline to help align with current acquisition realities.

Past Project Data

To better understand the implications of extending the ninety-day acquisition timeline, RCO staff compiled and compared acquisition data from combination projects since the time when the acquisition timeline for Salmon Recovery Funding Board projects was extended to eighteen months. The following table summarizes key acquisition parameters for completed combination projects with an acquisition component since 2010.

	Salmon Recovery Funding Board	Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
--	-------------------------------	---

Presence of Time Extension Amendment	34 of 45 (76%)	25 of 39 (64%)
Acquisitions under Waiver of Retroactivity	3 of 44 (7%)	12 of 35 (34%)
Acquisition Projects Completed in 18 Months	32 of 45 (71%)	29 of 35 (83%)
Single-Acquisition Projects Completed in 18 Months	23 of 24 (95%)	19 of 21 (90%)
Average length of time to acquisition completion	16.3 months (n=45)	8.3 months (n=35)
Average original agreement length	32 months (n=45)	28 months (n=45)
Average total agreement length	38 months (n=45)	36 months (n=37)

Here are some key takeaways from the data:

- Board acquisitions are more likely than Salmon Recovery Funding Board acquisitions to be acquired with a Waiver of Retroactivity and take half the time on average.
- Combination projects often end up getting a time extension amendment, regardless of the funding program, and there is a minimal difference in how long the overall projects last between the two programs (thirty-six months for board projects, versus thirty-eight months for Salmon Recovery Funding Board projects).
- Many acquisition components do not get completed within the required ninety-day window.
- Generally, single acquisitions within a combination project get done within eighteen months, whereas projects that involve multiple acquisitions seem to stretch out the timeline and possibly drive extensions.

Options for Acquisition Policy 2

Option 1: Extend the acquisition timeline for a combination project to nine months from the date of the board funding meeting.

Option 2: Extend the acquisition timeline for a combination project to twelve months from the date of the board funding meeting.

Option 3: Extend the acquisition timeline for a combination project to twelve months, and delegate to the director authority to extend an additional six months, from the date of the board funding meeting.

Option 4: Extend the acquisition timeline for a combination project to 18 months from the date of the board funding meeting.

Analysis

The past project data indicate that the current ninety-day acquisition timeline is not driving timely completion of combination projects and is not being actively tracked or enforced as part of project management. The comparisons with Salmon Recovery Funding Board projects suggest that extending the acquisition timeline may not significantly extend the overall project completion time. Instead, the way combination projects are initially scoped, phased and managed within a project agreement may have more of an influence on project outcomes and timely implementation.

Of the options presented, there is a clear operational benefit to matching the acquisition timelines for recreation and salmon recovery projects at eighteen months. This would allow a project to be more easily merged and managed if it received funding from both programs.

Acquisitions Policy 3 – Earnest Payment Eligibility

Currently, “earnest money” and “option payments” are listed as an ineligible cost in Manual 3, *Acquisition Policies*. These costs were added as part of a large update to acquisition policies during the fall of 2010. The board approved many of these changes via Resolution 2010-34; however, these policies regarding earnest money and option payments were not considered by the board and were instead made as an administrative change as part of the larger update.

It is not uncommon for eligible entities to provide earnest money in a purchase and sale agreement, or to purchase an option on a property, prior to seeking public funding for an acquisition project. These approaches help provide needed surety for the buyer and seller and constitute an important due diligence step required by Manual 3, as

consistent with [RCW 8.26.180](#). These payments can be structured such that the value of any earnest or option payment is applied toward the purchase price of the property at closing.

Washington Administrative Code (WAC) [286-13-085](#), *Retroactive, Pre-agreement, and Increased Costs* makes it clear that the board defines eligible pre-agreement costs. Per WAC 286-13-085 Section (4), "The only retroactive acquisition, development, and restoration costs eligible for grant funding are pre-agreement costs as defined by the board." WAC 286-13-085 Section (3) specifies that RCO's director may grant a waiver of retroactivity for acquiring real property in advance of the grant agreement. Without a Waiver of Retroactivity, land costs are not eligible as pre-agreement costs based on the policy outlined in [Manual 3](#), *Acquisition Policies*, which limits pre-agreement costs to administration costs and a subset of incidental costs.

Past Board Decisions

As part of this meeting (Item 11), the board is being asked to waive current policy to allow a \$50,000 earnest payment to be considered an eligible pre-agreement cost. This was paid by the Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District 2 to Whatcom Land Trust through a letter of intent, and was ultimately applied to the final purchase price after acquisition funding was acquired through the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) and WWRP – Water Access ([18-1945](#)).

Analysis

Since an earnest or option payment itself does not result in ownership of the property, these payments are best described as a pre-agreement incidental cost which eventually become a land cost at closing if applied towards the purchase price.

Not being able to seek reimbursement for these important up-front costs necessary to secure the property can impact the willingness of eligible entities to take on projects, especially smaller organizations with limited funds.

Staff is proposing that these types of earnest or option payments only become eligible if they are applied to the reviewed, appraised value of the property at closing during the grant performance period. If structured in this way, it would avoid conflicts with existing pre-agreement limitations on land costs without a Waiver of Retroactivity and would eliminate the possibility of sunk earnest or options costs from a project not proceeding to closing.

Allowing earnest or option payments to be eligible under these limited circumstances would support local project development and implementation in accordance with best

practices, while at the same time preserving the efficient and strategic use of state dollars.

Next Steps

If the board is comfortable moving forward with any of these acquisition policy changes and prefers certain options, RCO staff will seek public comment on the proposed changes. Depending on public comment received, RCO staff will then prepare recommendations and requests for approval as appropriate for future board consideration.

Attachments

- A. Existing Public Property – Option 1 (Current Manual 3) Language
- B. Existing Public Property - Option 2 Language
- C. Existing Public Property - Option 3 Language

Attachment A. Existing Public Property – Option 1 (Current Manual 3) Language

From the Ineligible Projects Section of Manual 3:

Grants may not be used to acquire the following:

- Established outdoor recreation areas developed under ownership or management of a public agency.

Acquisition of Existing Public Property section of Manual 3:

In general, property that already is under public ownership or management is not eligible for Recreation and Conservation Office grant funding. (See the Ineligible Projects section.) Land held by a tribal government is not considered public land. There is one exception to this policy that allows existing public property to be eligible for Recreation and Conservation Office grant funding, if all the following conditions are satisfied:

- State law requires that the agency selling the land must receive compensation.
- The land was not originally acquired by the selling agency for habitat conservation (for habitat conservation proposals), salmon habitat recovery (for salmon habitat recovery proposals), or recreation use (for outdoor recreation proposals).
- The land has never been publicly managed for habitat conservation (for habitat conservation proposals), salmon habitat recovery (for salmon habitat recovery proposals), or recreation (for outdoor recreation proposals).

State law¹ provides for the transfer of land from one public body to another without the requirement of full value compensation. Therefore, a project sponsor must provide other statutory evidence that the selling agency must receive compensation for the property. For example, state law² requires full value compensation of land when a local government transfers property from one department to another, and another state law³ requires irrigation districts to receive reasonable market value in certain transactions.

For projects in the **Land and Water Conservation Fund**, the property must be acquired under a Waiver of Retroactivity and meet only the first two criteria above.

¹Revised Code of Washington 39.33

²Revised Code of Washington 43.09.210

³Revised Code of Washington 87.03.136

Attachment B. Existing Public Property - Option 2 Language

From the Ineligible Projects Section of Manual 3:

Grants may not be used to acquire the following:

- Established outdoor recreation areas developed under ownership or management of a public agency, except that property under management may be approved by the RCO Director on a case-by-case basis (see Acquisition of Existing Public Property section).

Acquisition of Existing Public Property section of Manual 3:

In general, property that already is under public ownership or management is not eligible for RCO grant funding. (See the Ineligible Projects section.) Land held by a tribal government is not considered public land. There is one exception to this policy that allows existing public property to be eligible for RCO grant funding, if all the following conditions are satisfied:

- State law requires that the agency selling the land must receive compensation.
- The land was not originally acquired by the selling agency for habitat conservation (for habitat conservation proposals), salmon habitat recovery (for salmon habitat recovery proposals), or recreation use (for outdoor recreation proposals).
- The land has never been publicly managed for habitat conservation (for habitat conservation proposals), salmon habitat recovery (for salmon habitat recovery proposals), or recreation (for outdoor recreation proposals).

State law provides for the transfer of land from one public body to another without the requirement of full value compensation. Therefore, a project sponsor must provide other statutory evidence that the selling agency must receive compensation for the property. For example, state law requires full value compensation of land when a local government transfers property from one department to another, and another state law⁴ requires irrigation districts to receive reasonable market value in certain transactions.

For projects in the **Land and Water Conservation Fund**, the property must be acquired under a Waiver of Retroactivity and meet only the first two criteria above.

The RCO Director is authorized to waive the eligibility restrictions on property already under public management, as well as the third condition above, on a case-by-case basis, provided the proposed acquisition secures current or potential habitat conservation, salmon habitat recovery, or recreation benefits at a credible threat of loss.

Attachment C. Existing Public Property - Option 3 Language

From the Ineligible Projects Section of Manual 3:
Grants may not be used to acquire the following:

- Established outdoor recreation areas developed under ownership or ~~management~~ of a public agency.

Acquisition of Existing Public Property section of Manual 3:

In general, property that already is under public ownership or management is not eligible for RCO grant funding. (See the Ineligible Projects section.) Land held by a tribal government is not considered public land. There is one exception to this policy that allows existing public property to be eligible for RCO grant funding, if all the following conditions are satisfied:

- State law requires that the agency selling the land must receive compensation.
- The land was not originally acquired by the selling agency for habitat conservation (for habitat conservation proposals), salmon habitat recovery (for salmon habitat recovery proposals), or recreation use (for outdoor recreation proposals).
- ~~The land has never been publicly managed for habitat conservation (for habitat conservation proposals), salmon habitat recovery (for salmon habitat recovery proposals), or recreation (for outdoor recreation proposals).~~

State law⁵ provides for the transfer of land from one public body to another without the requirement of full value compensation. Therefore, a project sponsor must provide other statutory evidence that the selling agency must receive compensation for the property. For example, state law⁶ requires full value compensation of land when a local government transfers property from one department to another, and another state law⁷ requires irrigation districts to receive reasonable market value in certain transactions.

For projects in the **Land and Water Conservation Fund**, the property must be acquired under a Waiver of Retroactivity and ~~meet only the first two criteria above.~~

⁵Revised Code of Washington 39.33

⁶Revised Code of Washington 43.09.210

⁷Revised Code of Washington 87.03.136

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Briefing Memo

APPROVED BY RCO DIRECTOR MEGAN DUFY

Meeting Date: January 29, 2025

Title: Annual Compliance Report

Prepared By: Myra Barker, Compliance Unit Manager

Summary

Staff will provide an update and annual report on the agency's compliance program in 2024 and goals for 2025.

Board Action Requested

This item will be a:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Request for Decision
<input type="checkbox"/>	Request for Direction
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Briefing

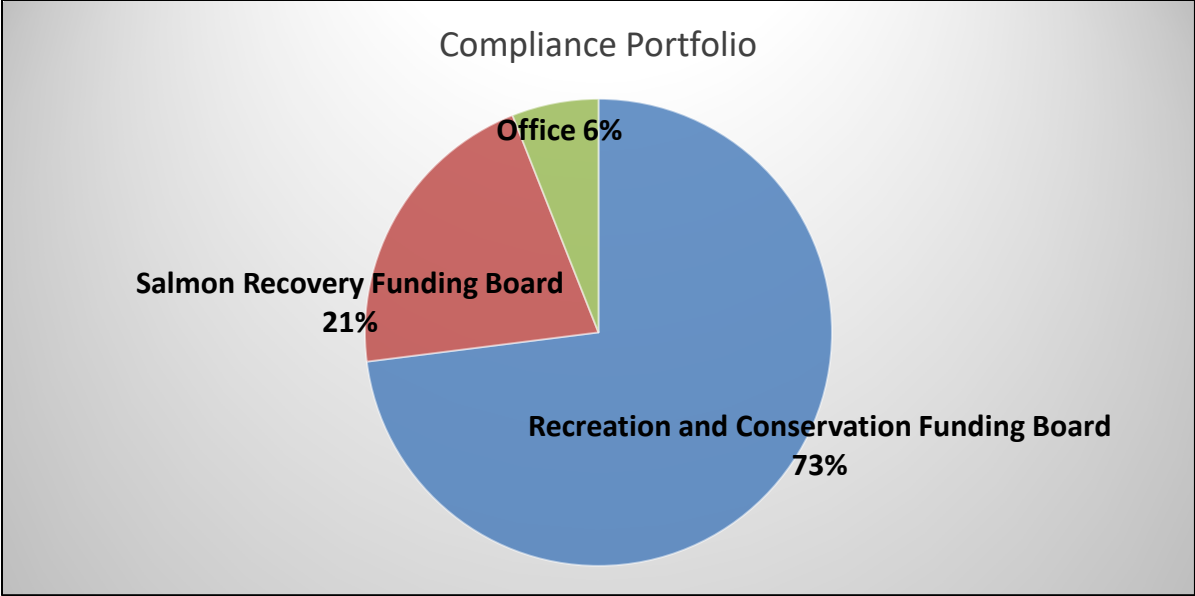
Background

The Recreation and Conservation Office's (RCO) compliance program helps ensure that sponsors and funded project areas remain in compliance with their grant agreements and that sites are maintained for public outdoor recreation, habitat conservation, and/or salmon recovery. RCO staff work collaboratively with a sponsor when a compliance issue is discovered, or when a non-compliant use or action is planned within the project area.

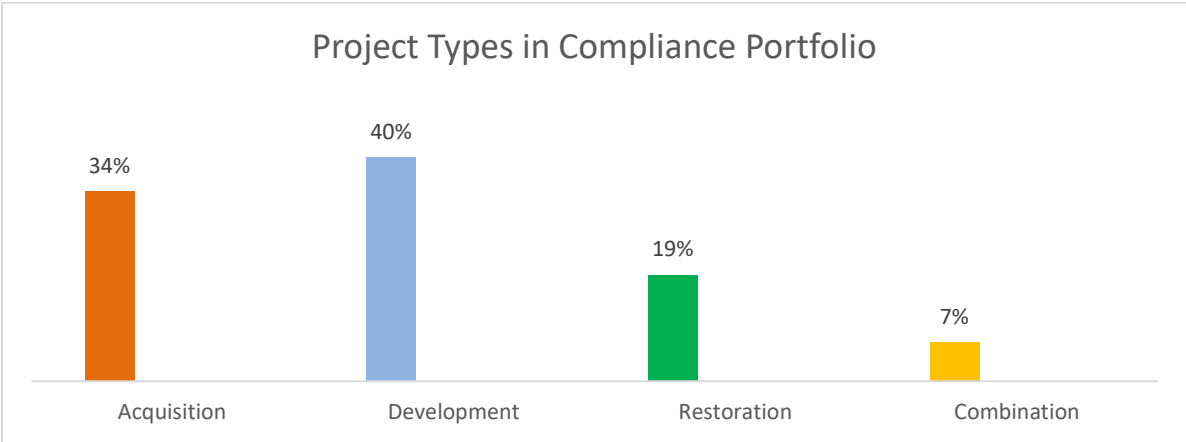
Compliance Portfolio

There are over 6,400 worksites funded through thirty-eight grant programs and categories in the compliance portfolio. The long-term grant obligation or compliance period applies to acquisition, development or renovation, and restoration project types. The compliance period varies by grant program and ranges from ten years to perpetuity.

The ratio of funded sites in the compliance portfolio continues to remain consistent over the past five years. Most sites in the portfolio are funded through the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) for outdoor recreation and habitat conservation. Salmon recovery sites funded through the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and Office salmon projects represent about a fourth of the portfolio. Office projects represent a very small portion of sites with a long-term obligation.



Acquisition projects have a perpetual compliance period and represent the second largest portion of project types in the portfolio. Most development projects also have a perpetual obligation and represent the majority of projects in the portfolio. Restoration projects represent the smallest project type and are primarily for improving salmon habitat with a ten-year compliance period.



2024 Compliance Report

Compliance staff provide ongoing consultation to sponsors and outdoor grants managers on a wide variety of issues, conduct compliance inspections, and work with sponsors on resolving issues. Staff respond to transportation agencies, public works staff, consultants, and the public about a site’s funding, grant obligations, and uses (current or planned).

The RCFB's compliance policies include allowable use, corrective action, and exception to conversion. These policies permit a change in use of the project area and resolving a compliance issue without requiring replacement.

In 2024, there were twenty-two allowable use requests submitted and approved. Ten requests for an exception to conversion were submitted and approved. RCFB approved an extension of one exception to conversion for a non-conforming use.

Compliance staff prioritized resolving issues in 2024. The year began with 303 open compliance issues. Staff completed three conversions and forty-nine issues were resolved and closed.

RCO received approval from the National Park Service for a compatible public facility for an educational/interpretive/park office building at a Land and Water Conservation Fund project.

Compliance staff completed 356 inspections. Fifty-nine compliance issues, including twelve conversions, were found during the inspections. Encroachments, ineligible structures and no public access or restricted public access were the most common issues noted.

The compliance rate for inspected sites was 83 percent.

2025 Compliance Goals

Inspections

A compliance inspection involves reviewing the grant project documentation, aerial imagery, property data, conducting an on-site inspection, identifying issues, mapping the grant boundary, and sending the inspection report to the sponsor. The agency's goal is to complete 400 compliance inspections in 2025.

Acquired properties and federally funded project areas remain the priority for inspections. The addition of the Land and Water Conservation Fund compliance grants manager helps in meeting this goal.

Issues

The agency's goal is to resolve 10 percent of the compliance issues. This work includes following up on issues identified during inspections by meeting with sponsors and identifying actions needed to resolve the issues.

PRISM Compliance Workbench

The Compliance Workbench is a module in PRISM for inspection reporting, tracking issues, documenting compliance work and now can be used to notify sponsors of obligations. The workbench was initially funded in 2013 with a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant. Minor improvements have been made since that time.

A National Park Service grant made it possible for staff to work with PRISM contractors to design and develop a compliance notice feature. Notices will be sent on an ongoing basis to sponsors for the long-term obligation of a grant, for unresolved conversions and compliance issues, undeveloped property, conservation easement monitoring report due, and for an expired compliance period.

Staff began implementing the notices in November.

Next Steps

Staff will implement the workplan and priorities and provide updates to the board as requested.



A publication of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

Northwest Treaty Tribes

Protecting Natural Resources for Everyone

Fall 2024

nwtreatytribes.org



Inside:

- Hair snares give insight into bear population
- Beach restoration aims to recover sockeye
- Buoy project gleans data from Skagit Bay
- Tribe experiments with cockle planting
- Surveys help manage razor clam population

Funding tribal hatcheries benefits everyone

by Ed Johnstone
NWIFC Chairman

The Biden-Harris Administration has awarded an unprecedented \$240 million to support the hatcheries that preserve salmon and steelhead runs in the Pacific Northwest and provide fishing opportunities for everyone.



The treaty tribes had to fight hard—alongside Sen. Cantwell, Sen. Murray and Rep. Kilmer—to secure this much-needed federal funding. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, will provide the funding directly to the tribes who reserved the right to fish in the treaties we signed in the 1850s.

NWIFC tribes appreciate this recognition of our tribal sovereignty and the acknowledgment of the unique relationship that exists between the U.S. government and tribes.

“Since time immemorial, tribes in the Pacific Northwest have relied on Pacific salmon, steelhead and other native fish species for sustenance and their cultural and spiritual ways of life,” said Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland. “This funding will help us deliver historic investments from the President’s Investing in America agenda that will empower Indigenous communities and safeguard resources they have stewarded since time immemorial.”

In spite of being part of one of the largest hatchery systems in the world, tribal hatcheries have historically been underfunded. Many of our aging structures need maintenance and upgrades. With this funding, tribes can begin to repair and modernize the facilities and improve resilience against impacts of climate change. This \$240 million is not enough to fully repair or modernize all the facilities in the Pacific Northwest, but it is a good start.

While Pacific salmon and steelhead have been brought to the brink of extinction by habitat loss, hatcheries have enabled populations to survive.

Unfortunately, enhancement programs have become a target for criticism and frivolous lawsuits that misrepresent the science behind fisheries management. They blame hatchery fish for reducing wild populations while ignoring factors for declines such as low stream flow, habitat loss, seal and sea lion predation, and climate change.

The allegations are simply not true that hatchery production in some way threatens wild salmon recovery. Tribal and state hatchery management is based on the latest, best available science with the goal of providing fishing opportunities and preserving weak runs.

There is no doubt that hatcheries improve fish abundance and distribution, and with careful management, can improve genetic diversity rather than harm it.

Hatcheries are just one of the tools used to manage salmon and steelhead populations. State and tribal co-managers also must regulate harvest along with habitat protection and the impacts of hydropower.

We depend on hatcheries for now, but we know that no amount of hatchery production—or harvest restrictions—will truly recover salmon until we restore the ecosystem to provide habitat.

While habitat protection and restoration remain our biggest challenges, especially given the impacts of climate change, this funding from the Inflation Reduction Act alleviates some of the financial burden from tribal hatcheries.

Upgrades will improve the production of healthy stocks that not only provide fishing opportunities for everyone, but also support the ecosystem and feed southern resident orcas and the other 137 species that rely upon salmon as a food source.

As Jennifer Quan, regional administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration West Coast Region, noted, tribes have received little help until now to operate the hatcheries that benefit everyone who lives here.

“Hatcheries produce the salmon that tribes need to live,” she said. “We are talking about food for the tribes and supporting their culture and their spirituality.”

We look forward to speedy implementation of this program that supports our treaty-protected rights to harvest and manage salmon.



Northwest Treaty Tribes

Protecting Natural Resources For Everyone

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Northwest Treaty Tribes is a quarterly publication of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. Free subscriptions are available. This edition is online at nwtreatytribes.org. Articles in Northwest Treaty Tribes may be reprinted.

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Tribal contact information is available under Member Tribes at nwtreatytribes.org.

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On the cover:

Lummi tribal fisherman Lonnie Phair pulls in his net while fishing for coho on the Nooksack River in September. *Kimberly Cauvel*



US V. WA 50



Tribal fishing opportunities growing at creek

For the first time, members of the Nooksack Indian Tribe were able to fish for hatchery chinook salmon returning to Whatcom Creek this fall. From Bellingham's Holly Street upstream to a bridge over the wooded Whatcom Creek Falls, individuals and families tried their luck at catching the fish.

The Whatcom Creek hatchery program began in 2018 and has grown large enough in recent years to support harvest. The program is overseen by state and tribal co-managers and supported by Bellingham Technical College, which enlists fisheries science students in spawning, raising and releasing the salmon each year.

Jeremiah Johnny, Nooksack's treaty protection advocate, said the opportunity for tribal members to fish where their ancestors did was long past due.

"This area is a very highly valued historic village site that has been closed off to us for many, many moons," Johnny said.

Using grant funding, the tribe's Nooksack Way of Life Prevention Program and Cultural Resources Department purchased fishing poles to lend out during the event, as well as coolers and ice so families could take their catches home.

Sisters Danielle and Tiarra McKay, and their cousins Audriana and Kolby Paez, were among those who borrowed poles and cast lines from the stream bank.

Kolby, 11, caught a salmon that weighed nearly 9 pounds.

While Kolby's catch turned out to be the only one of the day, the community's excitement and joy was palpable during the fishing event.

The Nooksack Indian Tribe and Lummi Nation held other fisheries on Whatcom

Creek this year as well, including Lummi youth fisheries for tribal members 18 years old and younger—a program that began last year.

Managed as a terminal fishery, the returning salmon are not needed to resupply the hatchery program or meant to spawn in the creek. The chinook are intended to feed wildlife—including orcas that may prey on them in the Salish Sea as their migrations cross—and to support tribal treaty fishing. —*Kimberly Cauvel*

Above: Siblings Kolby and Audriana Paez, and their cousins Danielle and Tiarra McKay, try pole fishing for chinook salmon in Whatcom Creek.

Below: A chinook makes a splash in a rocky pool at the creek. *Kimberly Cauvel (2)*



Beach restoration to support Lake Ozette sockeye

While most salmon create egg nests in streams, a portion of the Lake Ozette sockeye (blueback) population spawn on the beaches of its namesake lake.

Except where they can't because there is too much vegetation in the way.

Lake Ozette sockeye spawn in gravel beds along the lake's shoreline in November and December. To survive incubation, the eggs need oxygenated water which comes from wave action driving oxygenated water into the lakeside gravel, said Jonathan Scordino, a biologist for the Makah Tribe.

However, historic logging practices between the 1950s-1970s and other factors have increased fine sediments flowing into the lake, said Patrick Crain, Olympic National Park (ONP) fisheries biologist. Sediment settling on the spawning gravel has allowed vegetation to establish, resulting in thick vegetation and dense root mats along the shoreline, reducing the effectiveness of the wave action that cleans the gravel. It also physically prevents fish from using the gravel that was formerly available.

Changes to spawning habitat, as well as a myriad of other challenges, resulted in the collapse of the Lake Ozette sockeye population. Since the 1970s, the Makah Tribe's recovery efforts, including restricting fishing and supplementing the population through a Makah hatchery program, have stabilized the population but it is still not recovering, Scordino said.

Lake Ozette is home of the only run of sockeye within the Makah territory. The recovery of the stock is important to the tribe as it is a prized salmon and treaty resource. The tribe has worked to enhance and understand the sockeye population at Lake Ozette in order to return to traditional uses.

In 2022, the Grassroots Salmon Recovery Project was established as a partnership of the tribe, ONP and citizen volunteers with a goal of improving the habitat by clearing vegetation by hand from Olsen's Beach to promote recovery of Lake Ozette sockeye. The work was challenging in that it needed to be done with hand tools instead of machinery due to the culturally sensitive nature of the entire lake shoreline.

The Grassroots Project has no direct funding, using volunteer and staff time from partnering agencies and groups for



Above: Makah fisheries management intern Xavier Russell clears away thick vegetation along Lake Ozette.

Below: Makah fisheries management technician Jeremiah Greene pulls vegetation from Olsen's Beach on Lake Ozette. *Tiffany Royal (2)*

three-day work parties that occur annually in mid-July. Starting in 2023, the project was fortunate to have U.S. Coast Guard Station Neah Bay partner on the project, Scordino said.

"Our involvement in the Lake Ozette rehabilitation project is just one of many initiatives that demonstrate our commitment to the Makah community," said Micah Kaneshiro, Commanding Officer, USCG Station Neah Bay. "This project not only allows us to contribute to the preservation of a vital natural resource but also gives us the opportunity to work side by side with local residents, reinforcing the importance of collaboration and mutual support."

The Grassroots Project has completely cleared 285 feet of shoreline at Olsen's Beach since the start of the project and has begun treatment of an additional 75 feet, thanks to more than 100 people contributing more than 850 hours of time between 2022 and 2024.

"The Makah Tribe is proud of the dedication and hard work demonstrated by our fisheries staff in leading the Grassroots Salmon Recovery Project," said Makah Tribe Chairman Timothy J. Greene, Sr. "Our partnership with the Olympic National Park and the USCG Station Neah Bay has been vital to the

success of these efforts. We are grateful for their commitment to preserving our natural resources for future generations."

"We're just getting started but we're starting to see coarsening of the sediment and increased use of the site by spawning salmon," Crain said. "We are hopeful that our efforts will help kickstart the recovery of Lake Ozette sockeye." —*Tiffany Royal*



Billy Frank Jr. honored at park

Visitors to the recently renamed Billy Frank Jr. Park and Trail will find interpretive signage to teach them about the treaty rights warrior's legacy.

"Billy Frank Jr. and others did so much to retain our inherent right to fish," said Squaxin Island Tribe Chairman Kris Peters at an event commemorating the signs. "He sacrificed—and others sacrificed—so we could keep those inherent rights. The fight he fought and others fought will be felt for generations."

In addition to telling Billy's story, the signs include information on the Squaxin Island Tribe, the life cycle of salmon, and canoe journey landings hosted by the Nisqually Indian Tribe and Squaxin Island Tribe.

Additional informational markers can be found along the Billy Frank Jr. Trail between the corner of East Bay Drive/Olympia Avenue and the park at North Point (near KGY Radio).

In partnership with the Squaxin Island Tribe and the Frank family, Port of Olympia Commissioners previously approved the renaming of East Bay Trail and North Point Park to honor Frank's legacy.

"With this installation, we hope to show both our gratitude and our commitment to honoring his legacy as we strive to preserve and protect the environmental resources in our community," said Alex Smith, the Port of Olympia's executive director. —*Trevor Pyle*



Top: Squaxin Island Tribe Chairman Kris Peters speaks in front of new signs about Billy Frank Jr.'s life. Above: Squaxin Island drummers sing during a ceremony celebrating the installation. *Trevor Pyle (2)*

Exhibit previews Billy Frank Jr. statue ahead of Capitol display

A half-scale model of a Billy Frank Jr. statue is making the rounds during a statewide tour, giving residents a preview ahead of the installation of the completed bronze statue at the U.S. Capitol in fall 2025.

The model was on display at the Washington State History Museum this summer, along with an exhibit about salmon management since the Boldt decision and artwork by Native artists in various mediums.

The full-size bronze statue is expected to debut in the Capitol building in October 2025, replacing a statue of Marcus Whitman.

To find out where you can see the model in person—or request that it make a stop near you—visit arts.wa.gov/billy-frank-jr-on-tour. *Kimberly Cauvel*

BILLY FRANK JR. STATUE PROJECT

Washington State Department of Arts & Heritage

Project Details:

- Timeline:** 2023-2025. The statue is expected to be installed at the U.S. Capitol in fall 2025.
- Location:** The statue will be installed in the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C.
- Design:** The statue will be a half-scale model of Billy Frank Jr. sitting on a log, holding a fishing net.
- Artists:** The statue will be created by a team of artists, including the artist who created the statue of Marcus Whitman.

Project Goals:

- To honor Billy Frank Jr. and his legacy as a treaty rights warrior.
- To educate the public about the history of treaty rights and salmon management.
- To promote the arts and culture of the Pacific Northwest.

Exhibit Preview:

The exhibit is a half-scale model of the statue, which will be installed at the U.S. Capitol in fall 2025. The exhibit is on display at the Washington State History Museum in Olympia, WA, from July 15 to August 31, 2024.

Artist: The artist who created the statue of Marcus Whitman is also the artist who created the statue of Billy Frank Jr. The artist is a Native American and a member of the Squaxin Island Tribe.

Statue Description: The statue of Billy Frank Jr. will be a half-scale model of Billy Frank Jr. sitting on a log, holding a fishing net. The statue will be made of bronze and will be installed at the U.S. Capitol in fall 2025.

Statue Location: The statue will be installed in the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C.

Statue Significance: The statue of Billy Frank Jr. is a symbol of the treaty rights movement and the fight for salmon management. It is a tribute to Billy Frank Jr. and his legacy as a treaty rights warrior.



Study of cockle-growing methods underway

The Suquamish Tribe is figuring out how to give tribal members more access to cockles by growing their own.

“We’re looking at different strategies for enhancing/restoring cockles on Suquamish beaches because there hasn’t been the same level of wild recruitment folks used to see,” said Elizabeth Unsell, a shellfish biologist for the tribe. “Tribal members want to go out and harvest cockles for their family.”

This year the tribe collected data on the growth and survival of cockles in experimental beach plots.

More than 1,000 cockles that started as wild recruited seed in geoduck tubes on a South Sound shellfish farm were planted on a tribal beach in May, then were measured and counted in July and August.

To test different protective strategies, cockles were planted in 36 plots of varying types. Each was 3 feet wide, some fully enclosed in large plastic rings the size of a small garden bed, some without the garden bed, some with mesh on top

to protect them from predators and some without mesh. Control sites had no cockles added to them, so the tribe could look for wild recruitment, Unsell said.

The idea is to see what type of growing environment and outplanted cockle sizes are most successful.

Blood samples also were taken during data collection in July and August to test for bivalve transmissible neoplasia, or cockle cancer, at the Pacific Northwest Research Institute.

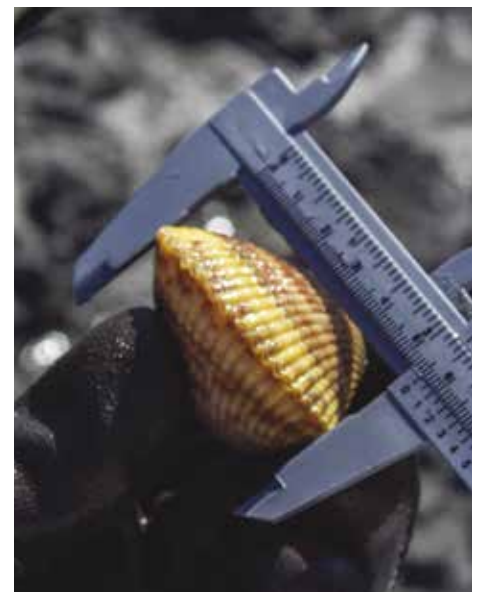
Research has shown that cockle cancer can be transmitted like a virus.

South Sound is not known to have the cockle cancer in its shellfish, Unsell said, but the tribe and partners want to know if these transferred cockles picked it up from the Suquamish beach this summer and if so, whether it’s seen at a higher rate than in the local population.

Preliminary results look promising, Unsell said, and work will continue next year. —*Tiffany Royal*

Above: Puget Sound Restoration Fund technicians Hayley Aronson and Malise Yun, with the help of 6-year-old Jesse Silvey, sort through cockles during the Suquamish Tribe’s study.

Below: A cockle is measured. *Tiffany Royal (2)*



Tribe probes sand to track clam numbers

Fisheries staff from the Quinault Indian Nation gathered on Kalaloch Beach on an early July morning to perform a task that would yield valuable data: using pumped-in seawater to liquefy circles of sand.

The process, carried out dozens of times, revealed the variety of creatures that live under the cover of sand, such as crabs and sand shrimp. But it was a specific one the tribe was searching for: Pacific razor clams.

The tribe does this every summer to assess the population of razor clams. The data governs future harvests to keep the population sustainable.

“It’s a good tool to have and does a good job estimating clams on the beach; both size and numbers,” said Scott Mazzone, Quinault marine fish and shellfish biologist.

On beaches managed with the state, co-managers share data to fine-tune population assessments. On each day Quinault—joined by Hoh tribal staff—conducted an assessment, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife staff conducted another one nearby.

The day before the assessment, staff search where razor clams are farthest from the water. Using that as a starting point the next day, they work their way toward the surf, liquefying a section of sand every 6 feet or so. The sand is liquefied in a half square meter area to the depth of 4 feet, compelling clams to float to the surface. The tribe then counts and measures the razor clams found.

“We look at all sizes of clams on the beach,” Mazzone said. “Both harvestable adult size clams, and young baby clams. If we see a new cohort coming onto the beach, it’s a good sign of a new generation getting established.” —*Trevor Pyle*



Brian Hoffman, a fisheries management biologist with the Hoh Tribe, assists with the Quinault Tribal Nation’s razor clam surveys in July. *Trevor Pyle*

Will these experimental traps catch European green crab?

Lummi Nation Aquatic Invasive Species Division staff deployed a series of innovative “crab slabs” around the Lummi Sea Pond in July to test the effectiveness of unbaited traps that mimic the habitat that invasive European green crab seek out.

The tribe has been battling the invasive species for years in the Lummi Sea Pond, which is important habitat for wildlife and supports the tribe’s shellfish hatchery program.

With intensive in-water trapping done most of the year, Lummi has successfully reduced the European green crab population in the sea pond. Still, the tribe is looking for ways to continue chipping away at the invasive crab’s stronghold in the local ecosystem.

“We’re looking for the crumbs in the corners,” said Jonathan Hallenbeck, a fisheries biologist for Lummi. “Maybe we can use these traps to reach those areas we can’t get to with the other traps.” *Kimberly Cauvel*



Tackling at-risk vessels before they pollute



Boats that fall into disrepair pose threats to fish, shellfish and the broader marine ecosystem. That's especially true of derelict vessels that may spill fuel into the water, as well as expel other chemicals over time as the structure deteriorates.

In an effort to reduce those risks in waters around the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community's homelands, the tribe is encouraging boat owners who are unable to properly maintain their vessels to turn them over for responsible demolition and recycling through a Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) program.

"We're a tight-knit fishing community and our team here has battled abandoned and derelict boats for many, many years," said J.J. Wilbur, a tribal senator and chair of the tribe's Port Authority.

Swinomish descendant and reservation resident Tiana Mcleod said the DNR program had great value to her family, enabling them to part with nine retired fishing and pleasure boats this year.

"It's an incredible gift to be able to move through some of the boat graveyard," Mcleod said.

Vessel Turn-In Program partners said the Mcleod family story is an example of a common problem: personal and financial issues combining to make vessel upkeep unmanageable.

—Kimberly Cauvel



Above: J.J. Wilbur, a Swinomish senator and chair of the tribe's Port Authority, speaks about the value of the Vessel Turn-In Program during a demonstration this summer.

Top: An excavator operated by Doyle Schmidt, a contractor with La Conner Maritime, pulls apart a boat surrendered through the Vessel Turn-In Program. Kimberly Cauvel (2)



Dan Sulak, environmental monitoring biologist for the Swinomish Fisheries Department, downloads data from research instruments tethered to a buoy in Skagit Bay. *Kimberly Cauvel*

Tribe gathers water quality data from Skagit Bay

To better understand how the health of Skagit Bay shifts over time and how changes correlate with the health of treaty resources, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community is for the first time gathering its own continuous oceanographic data.

The tribe's fisheries department in mid-2023 deployed a buoy in the bay equipped with research instruments that automatically record water temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen and chlorophyll content of the water every 15 minutes at about 3 feet below the surface.

"It's establishing a baseline," said Dan Sulak, environmental monitoring biologist for the fisheries department. "These kinds of data haven't been collected in this area before, so we are starting to keep this record."

Tracking these types of data is increasingly important as records around the globe show that climate change is influencing air and water temperatures, the carbon content of the ocean and more.

Shellfish species important to the tribe have been impacted by these changes, with heat waves cooking them on the

shores and ocean acidification weakening their shells.

Most recently, a hot spell in July killed cockles left vulnerable during low tide. That mortality event was discovered during an eelgrass survey the tribe was conducting on reservation beaches.

"We've been collecting a lot of species and biological data for a long time, but this is a first for oceanographic data," Sulak said of the new buoy.

The tribe's effort is filling a gap left by other research networks as well. Despite the Skagit River's significant influence on the marine environment, the closest buoys operated by government agencies are in Padilla Bay and Penn Cove.

The tribe's hope is that over time, the buoy quietly archiving data in the bay may serve as a warning beacon—as thresholds too hot, too acidic, or otherwise harmful to fish and shellfish are reached—and fisheries management tool.

"As this dataset continues to grow, the information will cultivate a better understanding of fisheries in this region," said Tandy Wilbur, the tribe's fisheries manager. "This includes possibilities such as better forecasting local salmon returns and predicting when stressful environmental thresholds will occur for shellfish."

For now, Sulak visits the buoy monthly to clean the instruments and download the data. —*Kimberly Cauvel*

"As this dataset continues to grow, the information will cultivate a better understanding of fisheries in this region."

Tandy Wilbur
Fisheries Manager
Swinomish Tribe



Snare capture DNA for bear population

The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe is snaring black bear hair to better understand the local population.

Genetic analysis of the samples will help the tribe estimate the size of the existing bear population. The tribe will then compare the results to those from its ongoing wildlife camera study to verify the precision of the latter method.

“Genetic comparisons are the gold standard for any sort of estimate,” said Sara Cendejas-Zarelli, one of the tribe’s wildlife biologists. “It’ll give us a really close approximation, so we can see if our camera study is accurate.”

More than 500 wildlife cameras have been placed around the Olympic Peninsula the past few years to get population estimates for six major species: bears, bobcats, coyotes, cougar, deer and elk.

Black bears are harvested by tribal members under the tribe’s hunting regulations but there isn’t much data about their population numbers, said Kim Sager-Fradkin, the tribe’s wildlife program manager.

The tribe allows harvest of one bear a year per tribal member and only a few tribal members a year attempt a harvest, she said. While there is not a high rate of harvest, knowing the bear populations helps the tribe manage harvest regulations.

“Genetic comparisons are the gold standard for any sort of estimate.”

Sara Cendejas-Zarelli
Wildlife biologist
Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe

Aside from bear meat, other parts of the animal are used in traditional ways, including the fur, claws and teeth for regalia, bones for tools and fat for making red face paint, specifically for spiritual protection.

To collect hair samples, 36 snare sites were set up within the North Olympic Peninsula this spring between Clallam Bay and Joyce. Biologists wrapped lines of barbed wire around a group of three to five trees, creating an enclosure. Inside, biologists piled up dead wood and logs, dousing it in a stinky liquid that attracts bears. When bears investigated the wood pile by crawling through the fence of barbed wire, hair samples were snagged. A wildlife camera also was set up nearby to catch the action.

Biologists checked the snares every 7-10 days between May and July, when bears are most active and hunting season is closed. The hair samples were sent to a genetics lab in Canada to identify individual bears.

The tribe and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) collaborated on the project, with the state providing the supplies and protocol, the tribe checking the stations, and the state submitting the samples for analysis. Each is using the data for its own population estimates. WDFW is building a baseline across the whole state, while the tribe is focused on the bear population within its usual and accustomed areas. —Tiffany Royal



Top: Sara Cendejas-Zarelli, wildlife biologist for the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, checks for bear hair at one of the stations. Tiffany Royal Above: A bear hair sample from a snare station. Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe

Pot removal supports crab population

The heavy breaths of a diver come over the intercom on the *F/V Cadence*, telling the deck crew what he's seeing at about 100 feet deep in North Hood Canal.

The diver, David Blackshaw, is looking for a derelict crab pot, one of the nearly 11,000 that are lost every year in Puget Sound.

Finding one, Blackshaw clips a rope to the pot with a carabiner, then instructs the deck crew to haul it up. As the pot surfaces, two deckhands grab and inspect it, removing any caught shellfish, including several large Dungeness crab.

"That's exactly what we don't want," said Jason Morgan, the marine projects manager for the Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF), which oversees the region's derelict pot removal and works with tribes like Port Gamble S'Klallam in these efforts. "The number one impact of derelict crab pots is on Dungeness crab."

After a pot is lost on the floor of the sound, it will continue to "ghost fish"—catching crab with no one to harvest or release them.

"Once the bait in the trap is gone, trapped crab will feed on other crab," Morgan said. "Slower, more lethargic, smaller crab can get eaten by the bigger crab. Crab die. Crab come and feed on dead crab. It can be a self-feeding mechanism."

Within the 11,000 pots, more than 140,000 harvestable Dungeness crab die annually, he said.

"Tribal fishers depend on crab and other shellfish for their economic livelihoods, traditional cultural practices, and subsistence," said Josh Carter, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe's environmental scientist. "Anything that prevents crab from needlessly dying is a boon for the tribe, particularly given all of the other environmental threats to tribal members' way of life."

The tribe has more than 70 registered crabbers, earning about \$4.5 million a year overall.

While NWSF and partner Natural Resources Consultants conduct removals all over the sound regularly, it isn't feasible to try and get all 11,000, Morgan said. The foundation instead focuses on education and outreach, such as teaching crabbers how to prevent pots from ghost fishing should they become unretrievable.

"If we can do things like make a more effective pot, allowing crab to escape once



A dive team retrieves derelict crab pots near Port Gamble Bay. *Tiffany Royal*

it is lost, that'll really go a long way," he said. "The number one cause is user error with unweighted pots and not having enough line being the most common problem."

Since the program started in 2002, more than 8,000 pots have been retrieved. After inspection, they are either returned to the owner, donated, reused or recycled.

The partnership with the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe started when the North Kitsap Puget Sound Anglers Club approached the tribe and NWSF about doing a crab pot removal project together. After securing funding, NWSF and the tribe were able to conduct a removal session this summer in Port Gamble Bay, North Hood Canal and Squamish Harbor.

To find derelict pots, the foundation surveys the water using sidescan sonar. A torpedo-shaped sonar is dragged on a cable behind a boat. The sonar sends beams from both sides, scanning a 50-meter swath. The boat and sonar will track back and forth across an area to collect data, which is later analyzed for potential pot locations. After an area is scanned, a dive boat is contracted, dates are set and divers retrieve the pots they can find.

In June 2024, 141 pots were identified in a scan and 96 of those pots were removed. The remaining were either not found, were rocks or stumps mistaken as crab pots, or were more than 75% buried in the sediment, unable to be removed but disabled so they could no longer catch crab, Morgan said.

Crab pots need escape routes

Every crab pot has an "emergency escape route" which engages after a pot has been lost for a period of time to allow crab to escape. There is an escape ring for undersized and female crab to exit from at any time (crab fisheries only allow for males 6 ¼" inches wide or larger to be harvested).

However, not every pot is made the same; some pots have escape routes for crab that work and some don't, Morgan said.

NWSF conducted a crab pot escape-ment study in 2015, showing that while a certain type of escape system within a crab pot works the best, many of the pots used today are not effective at allowing crab to escape.

A simple solution is to have an escape ring attached with "rot cord"—a type of natural fabric, such as ⅛" cotton string, that degrades and creates an outlet for crab to escape if the pot is lost. The NWSF study showed that all crab have the ability to escape with this simple modification to ineffective pot designs. Using plastic, such as zip-ties, is illegal and defeats the purpose.

For more information, visit: nwstraits-foundation.org/derelict-gear.

—*Tiffany Royal*



This forest on the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe’s reservation shows a characteristically dense, high-stocked Douglas fir stand that could be made more resilient and diverse through managed thinning and planting. *Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe*

Climate funding supports tribal resiliency projects

For years, tribes in western Washington have been gathering data on how climate change affects their tribal members, but there hasn’t been much funding available to support implementing mitigation and adaptation strategies.

That changed with federal Inflation Reduction Act and Washington state’s Climate Commitment Act (CCA) in 2021, when funding became available to support western Washington tribes’ climate resiliency work.

“This funding supports a tribe’s ability to exercise their own self-determination and decide what is best for their community,” said Jennie Harlan, the Suquamish Tribe’s climate education and outreach coordinator.

That resource is being threatened with I-2117, an initiative on the ballot this fall that proposes repealing the act.

The CCA created a funding source from auctioning emission allowances to businesses that produce greenhouse gases. More than \$3 billion was generated in the 2023-2025 budget; \$153 million of it was distributed to salmon recovery projects.

Tribes also have been using CCA funding to hire staff to gather data and implement climate action plans for tribal communities.

The Suquamish Tribe developed a priority climate action plan, which came from evaluating the tribe’s greenhouse gas emissions, said Hannah Ljunggren, the tribe’s climate resiliency program manager.

The tribe determined five priorities to address, including installing ductless heat pumps into tribal members’ homes, making energy efficiency improvements to tribal buildings, electrifying

the tribe’s fleet, providing an electric car sharing program for tribal members, and installing solar panels on tribal buildings. The tribe also is creating job opportunities for tribal members and educating the tribal community about the importance of reducing emissions in their homes and becoming more climate resilient.

The biggest thing that CCA funding has provided for tribes is staff capacity to develop and implement climate resiliency plans.

“Without the CCA funds, we’ll have all this information on the work we could do, but nobody to execute it,” said Annie Smaus, the Suquamish Tribe’s climate resilience specialist.

Other tribes, including Port Gamble S’Klallam, also have been putting CCA funding toward climate action planning, including assessing the tribe’s carbon footprint and determining key opportunities to reduce emissions, said Ben Harrison, the tribe’s environmental scientist.

“We are also working to evaluate the tribe’s forest and wetland areas for carbon storage potential through active management, including but not limited to understory planting and constructed wetlands,” he said.

This work will complement efforts outside the tribe’s natural resources department to investigate renewable energy and microgrid opportunities, plus key ecosystem and water resource vulnerabilities to climate impacts.

The Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe is similarly building its staff capacity to address climate impacts, as well as working with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Sequim to assess local clean energy sources including solar, wind, geothermal and marine energy.

With its current funding, the tribe has several projects planned over the next year, said Robert Knapp, Jamestown S’Klallam environmental planning manager. These include purchasing electric vehicle charging equipment, constructing a bike shelter for employees who bike to work, and implementing energy efficiency projects for tribal government buildings and low-income tribal housing. The tribe already has installed solar panels on two tribal buildings, purchased two electric vehicles, and installed electric vehicle charging equipment at tribal facilities.

“CCA funding is helping tribes to build and expand their capacity to address the impacts and causes of climate change,” Knapp said. “CCA funding is helping tribe’s protect treaty rights.” —*Tiffany Royal*



One of the new electric car charging stations installed on the Jamestown S’Klallam government campus. *Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe*

Quinault's retreat from rising waters gets funding boost

Thanks to funding made possible by the state's Climate Commitment Act, the Quinault Indian Nation's mission to face climate change head-on has gained momentum.

Quinault recently announced that it will use \$13 million in funding toward moving the villages of Taholah and Queets out of the Olympic Coast's flooding and tsunami zone. The funds will help make possible a new building to house child and elder services, an emergency shelter on safe ground in Queets, and a new water tank and pump house on higher ground in Taholah.

The funding will also help the tribe develop a master plan and designs for a new museum and cultural center.

Quinault President Guy Capoeman and members of the tribal council were joined

by Gov. Jay Inslee in Taholah in July to announce the funding.

Moving the two villages is no small matter but the tribe is up to it, Capoeman said.

Climate change has sharply increased threats to the tribe's Taholah and Queets communities through sea level rise and flooding. Tsunamis, which could be triggered by earthquakes, pose another threat.

"We're at ground zero," he said. "We see these changes."

After study and community discussions, the tribe decided to move its structures and people to higher, safer ground, a process that's been underway for years.

"The Quinault people are an example of two things: people threatened by climate change, and people willing to do something about it," Inslee said. —Trevor Pyle



Quinault President Guy Capoeman speaks about moving Quinault villages due to climate change. Office of Governor Jay Inslee

Hoh tribe invests funds in climate change assessment



Hoh tribal fisher Michael Sampson pulls in his net. Fishing, threatened by climate change, is a primary concern of the tribe's study funded by the state Climate Commitment Act. *NWIFC file photo*

The Hoh Tribe is producing a climate change assessment combining the knowledge of tribal members with hard data.

The tribe used Climate Commitment Act funding to hire recent University of Washington graduate Hannah Tennent on a one-year Hershman Fellowship through

Washington Sea Grant.

Her role is to explore potential vulnerabilities and goals, adding to the work the tribe has been doing to mitigate the effects of climate change, from protecting fish to moving sites vulnerable to flooding to higher ground.

"The tribe is already doing a

lot in terms of climate change," Tennent said.

While Tennent's role in compiling climate measurements and projections is crucial to the assessment—which may help the tribe pursue grants and projects to mitigate climate change—another aspect excited her as well: the opportunity to interview tribal members, including elders, about their own knowledge, observations and history.

With the assistance of tribal historic preservation officer Kelly Rosales, Tennent interviewed 13 tribal members, who brought with them a storehouse of memories and observations.

"I got to sit down with them and learn from them," Tennent said. "It came across loud and clear how impactful the decline in fish is.

"There's a huge economic decline, a decline in cultural resources, a change in availability of what people want to eat," she said. "It was striking

how fast that decline was. People talk about, when they were young, catching 50-pound salmon—now they're lucky to catch one that weighs in at 15 or 20 pounds."

The Climate Commitment Act is a state law passed in 2021 that caps and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. As part of the act, funds from emission auctions support climate resiliency programs such as the tribe's climate change assessment.

Tennent hopes her work supports the tribe's efforts to battle climate change.

"Climate change will affect cultural institutions, economic resources and treaty rights," she said. "Any projects the Hoh Tribe can do to preserve access to resources or create connections between members—anything that can increase well-being for people and the resources they care about—would be incredible."

—Trevor Pyle

Tribe managing national wildlife refuges

The Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe took on management of the Dungeness and Protection Island national wildlife refuges this summer from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The shift came after the Tribal Homelands Initiative was introduced in November 2021 to strengthen the role of tribes in federal land management.

“While S’Klallam stewardship of Dungeness and Protection Island predates the existence of the wildlife refuge system, the tribe embraces the opportunity to cooperatively manage these refuges,” said W. Ron Allen, the tribe’s CEO and chairman.

Tribal staff will oversee most of the programs, functions, services and activities related to managing the refuges. The tribe hopes to pair its volunteer program at the Dungeness River Nature Center, also owned by the tribe, with the refuge volunteer program.

Law enforcement overseeing the refuges will still be under federal jurisdiction, but the tribe’s law enforcement, which is cross deputized with Clallam County, will respond on coordinated efforts.

Visitors to the Dungeness refuge shouldn’t see any differences in day-to-day operations with the changeover in management, Allen said. The Protection Island refuge is off limits to the public to protect the island’s sensitive and undisturbed habitat for sea life and marine mammals.

The tribe would like to restart education and outreach programming at the Dungeness refuge, and expand research and monitoring initiatives to better share, understand and conserve the traditional lands and water of the tribe.



Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe councilmember Dana Ward enjoys the view from the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge. *Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe*

Oyster cultivation supports tribal economy, culture

Inside the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge, the tribe grows oysters within a 50-acre tideland parcel, currently leased by the tribe from the state Department of Natural Resources.

The tribe has all required local, state and federal permits to grow Pacific oysters within the parcel using two cultivation methods: on-bottom bags and loose oysters.

Jamestown Seafood has planted 200,000 Pacific oyster seeds within a half-acre of the tidelands over the past three years without the use of on-bottom grow bags. These oysters grow on the beach to maturity, and are harvested by hand into bags that are removed by boat during high tide.

“The tribe’s goal is to continue to grow oysters freely, without the need for any gear, as long as it is practical to do so,” said Liz Tobin, the tribe’s shellfish program manager.

Farming Pacific oysters in this location is not new; oysters were cultivated here continuously from 1963-2005 when operations ceased due to poor water quality. The tribe, which has leased the land since 1990, dedicated staff and funding to improve the water quality so it could resume oyster farming for economic and cultural purposes, as harvesting, consuming and trading shellfish has been a way of life for the tribe since time immemorial.

—Tiffany Royal

Observing canoe landing protocol

Young tribal members who participated in the Power Paddle to Puyallup Youth Canoe Journey this summer wait to ask permission to come ashore in Puyallup.

Nearly 80 canoe families took part in the journey and were welcomed by tribes along the way as they traveled their ancestors’ traditional routes. *Trevor Pyle*





Nisqually First Salmon

The Nisqually Indian Tribe held its First Salmon Ceremony in August.

Top: After the first salmon was filleted, Annatehya Garcia (left) and Tamika Wells return its remains to the water on a cedar plank that belonged to Nisqually elder Reuben Wells Sr., whose fishing area has been used by tribal members for generations.

Left: Reuben Wells Jr. observes salmon as it smokes.

Above: John Scott prepares salmon for smoking. *Trevor Pyle (3)*

SEVEN GENERATIONS

A Makah woman cleans halibut on the beach at Neah Bay, circa 1896-1903. *Photographer: Samuel Morse. Courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society at WashingtonHistory.org.*





A publication of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

Northwest Treaty Tribes

Protecting Natural Resources for Everyone

Winter 2025

nwtreatytribes.org

Inside:

- Chinook to benefit from estuary restoration
- Native students inspired at salmon summit
- Partnerships engage youth outdoors
- Chum returns larger than expected
- Test fishery guides crab harvest

Fish passage is worth the price

by Ed Johnstone
NWIFC Chairman

Fish passage restoration is not just a treaty rights issue—it benefits the entire region. No matter the expense, culvert repair is one of the most cost-effective ways to increase the number of naturally spawning salmon in our waters.



These are the salmon that will feed our struggling southern resident orca population. These are the salmon that provide recreational fishing opportunities that boost tourism and our economy.

The state of Washington must fully fund fish barrier removal so it can meet its court-ordered deadline of 2030. This deadline was set by a federal judge in 2013, but access to spawning habitat was meant to be guaranteed to salmon in the Pacific Northwest since before Washington was a state.

An 1848 Congressional Act stated, “the rivers and streams of water in said Territory of Oregon (which included the land that would become Washington) in which salmon are found, or to which they resort, shall not be obstructed by dams or otherwise, unless such dams or obstructions are so constructed as to allow salmon to pass freely up and down such rivers and streams.”

Unfortunately, that didn’t stop human development from blocking fish passage with bridges, dams, inadequate culverts and other means of habitat destruction. And now many of our salmon runs face extinction because they don’t have enough habitat where they can spawn.

The state of Washington was reminded of its obligation to ensure salmon passage in a 2018 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that upheld the 2030 deadline to repair 90% of its fish-blocking culverts.

The court decision was based on our treaties, which are the supreme law of the land. When our ancestors signed the treaties, Gov. Isaac Stevens told them, “This paper secures your fish.”

As a keystone species, salmon are at the heart of not only the Pacific Northwest’s environmental health, but our economy as well. Everyone who says they care about protecting salmon, orcas, clean water, forests and the environment in general should

hold the state accountable for meeting that deadline.

Earlier this year, The Seattle Times editorial board echoed a phrase we heard often from my mentor, the late NWIFC Chairman Billy Frank Jr., when they urged the state to “Stay the course on culvert removal.”

We are in a race against time as climate change warms our waters and salmon habitat continues to be destroyed by development. Our state Legislature must provide ample funding—more than they have in the past—to restore fish passage.

Our law requires the removal of all fish barriers, both privately and publicly owned. The state is the only party court-ordered to do it by 2030, but that work can have a cascading effect leading to a healthier ecosystem.

Secretary Roger Millar of Washington state’s Department of Transportation (WSDOT) called it a “moonshot—a monumental, aspirational effort,” recognizing the importance of fixing state culverts even if there are other blockages on the same stream.

“When we correct our barriers, it creates or continues momentum as WSDOT barriers are often the largest and most expensive,” he said. “Other owners in that same watershed may have less expensive barriers that likely will score higher for grant funding opportunities to correct them after our work is complete.”

We’ve already seen salmon spawning in newly restored habitat after culverts have been removed. There are proven benefits to completing this work.

Yes, it’s a daunting and expensive task, but the survival of salmon is at stake. As stewards of the environment, we should be willing to do whatever it takes to protect salmon for future generations.



Northwest Treaty Tribes
Protecting Natural Resources For Everyone

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On the cover:
Skokomish tribal member Travis Prest Jr. beach seines for chum salmon in Hoodspout. More photos of the fishery are on page 7. *Tiffany Royal*



Logjams boost salmon habitat

The function of large wood in a river for salmon habitat could be compared to the game Plinko, from the TV show “The Price is Right.”

With the wood structures as the bounce points and the water as the chip, water slows as it moves downstream, making it easier for salmon to swim upstream to spawn.

But because of floodplain loss and deforestation along the lower Elwha River, those structures have disappeared.

To re-establish the benefits of large wood for salmon, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe has been installing engineered logjams (ELJs) in river mile 3.

“That’s really the issue up here—the management of velocity and stream energy—because this is probably the most impacted reach of the Elwha River in terms of floodplain constrictions,” said Mike McHenry, a habitat biologist for the tribe.

The latest restored section of the Elwha River has been impacted by removal of riparian forest plus development upstream, such as the city of Port Angeles’ water intakes and well, a state fish hatchery, and a temporary sediment treatment plant that was built to mitigate the effects of dam removal.

“With that infrastructure, we lost a lot of the historic floodplain where the river’s energy was originally distributed,” McHenry said. “Now it’s funneled, creating a firehose effect. We’ve got super high velocities coming through this reach and ELJs are designed to break that up.”

The tribe installed 18 ELJs in one-third of a mile in 2024, bringing the tribe’s overall logjam count to nearly 100 in

the three decades the tribe has been building them.

“When you increase the density of ELJs in a river like this, you really force some pretty dramatic habitat changes,” McHenry said. “You increase the number of pools, dramatically increase the number of side channels, and as a result, there is an interactive effect between the jams.”

This area of river now has multiple channels where the water can spread out as well as forested islands that serve multiple purposes.

When there were historic levels of wood in the river, it was common that islands would form downstream of stable logjams, McHenry said.

On the upstream end of an island, a scour hole develops, creating a pool 9- to-15-foot deep where adult fish—such as chinook, coho and steelhead—like to hang out. The pools also are deep enough to source the groundwater, which helps keep the river’s water temperatures cool.

Another feature of forested islands is that gravel and sediment settle along the margins and tail end of the logjams, creating areas optimal for spawning, said Jamie Michel, the tribe’s habitat program manager.

“You’ve got a lot of great habitat in and among the wood for juvenile fish, and the adults can hang in the deep pools,” he said. “You’re increasing the complexity in it and the logjams are designed to collect additional wood, allowing the river to rearrange itself every time there is a flood of significance.”

After more than 30 years of salmon restoration and dam



Engineered logjams were installed in the Elwha River in summer 2024 to enhance salmon habitat. *Natural Systems Design*

removal, salmon have returned to the Elwha, but the work is not over. There are areas along the river where habitat restoration is still needed.

“This system is unique, with much of the watershed being in Olympic National Park, but once you leave that, you still have that legacy of land clearing, floodplain development and loss of all

that large wood that would have otherwise contributed to channel complexity,” Michel said. “We’ll just continue to watch the evolution of the river and see where additional restoration might be appropriate, when an opportunity arises.”

—Tiffany Royal



Nisqually natural resources manager James Slape Jr. inspects a culvert on Brighton Creek. The tribe and partners plan to replace the culvert, a project that will open 6 miles of salmon habitat. *Nisqually Indian Tribe*

“It’ll definitely benefit Nisqually steelhead, which are listed under the Endangered Species Act as threatened.”

Chris Ellings
Salmon Recovery Manager
Nisqually Indian Tribe

Fish could thrive again after culvert removal

For decades, a culvert on Brighton Creek has blocked miles of salmon habitat, proving a harmful barrier to steelhead, coho and chum returning to the Nisqually River tributary attempting to spawn.

Now the Nisqually Indian Tribe and partners have secured federal funding that could open up to 6 miles of habitat, allowing fish to thrive there again.

The tribe and Pierce County coordinated efforts to earn funding through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act.

“We’ve partnered with them before but this project was top of our list,” said Chris Ellings, the tribe’s salmon recovery program manager.

“This has been a high priority for the tribe for a number of years now,” said Nisqually Tribe Chairman Ken Choke. “It’s fantastic that we finally have all the funding pieces we need to open up this important stream to our salmon.”

The tribe has sought to replace the culvert for years. It was a difficult task, Ellings said, because the amount of fill needed to replace the culvert meant it would cost more, and most funding is focused on chinook, a species not found in abundance in the creek.

The passage of the Inflation Reduction Act changed the landscape. Applying through NOAA’s Restoring Tribal Priority Fish Passage through Barrier Removal program, the tribe received funding and moved closer to the long-pursued goal.

With engineering and permitting planned for 2025 and construction the year after, crucial species could again access a lengthy stretch of Brighton Creek.

“It’ll definitely benefit Nisqually steelhead, which are listed under the Endangered Species Act as threatened,” Ellings said. “They’re genetically unique and wild. It’ll also be beneficial to Nisqually coho. But the big benefit will be to Nisqually winter chum.”

Winter chum salmon are a traditional subsistence fish for the tribe, helping the community get through a season when there are fewer traditional foods available. Like many salmon runs, the chum population has steeply declined as a result of seal and sea lion predation as well as ongoing habitat loss.

The perched culvert on Brighton Creek will be replaced by a channel-spanning one. Climate change projections will be incorporated to prevent flooding, and a wildlife crossing will be included.

The replacement of fish-blocking culverts with more ecologically sound fish-passage measures carries many benefits. The resulting increased fish populations provide more fishing opportunities for tribal and nontribal fishers, boost Washington state’s economy and help restore wild runs of fish. They also help protect orca populations by increasing the number of prey.

—Trevor Pyle



Skagit River System Cooperative restoration ecologist Sue Madsen takes notes at an undersized, debris-impacted culvert on a Forest Service road crossing over False All Creek.



A rusted, undersized culvert removed from Green Creek is taken across the bridge that replaced it in 2024. Skagit River System Cooperative (2)

Culvert projects progressing throughout watershed

In the effort to recover Northwest salmon populations, restoring access to spawning and rearing habitat is key.

The Skagit River System Cooperative (SRSC), a natural resources management agency of the Swinomish and Sauk-Suiattle tribes, is helping reopen streams to salmon with a growing roster of fish passage improvement projects throughout the Skagit River watershed.

In recent years, the effort has received federal dollars through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act's fish passage funding distributed through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. SRSC has been awarded \$4.5 million for tribal priority fish passage projects including on the Green Creek, Hatchery Creek and Martin Slough tributaries to the Skagit River. Green Creek also is called, and commonly mapped as, Everett Creek.

In 2024, SRSC replaced a 4-foot diame-

ter culvert that was choking Green Creek, east of Darrington, with a 30-foot bridge.

Federal funding also has supported the design of projects on Hatchery Creek and Martin Slough, and in future years will support additional construction in the Green Creek system, along a USDA Forest Service road in the Suiattle River watershed, at fish passage barriers on the Sauk-Suiattle and Swinomish reservations, and at the Swinomish Tribe's Similk Bay estuary project.

"We are making progress and we also have a lot of projects in the pipeline," said Sue Madsen, an SRSC restoration ecologist.

The projects are scattered throughout the watershed to benefit a variety of salmonids.

"We're really focusing on fish diversity. We want to make sure all of our salmon species in the Skagit are doing well," Madsen said.

Improved access to Green Creek will be most beneficial for coho and steelhead, while the Similk Bay project will give chinook the biggest boost.

While SRSC is the lead on projects within Swinomish and Sauk-Suiattle ownership, the organization also is part of a network of partners in salmon recovery.

The Skagit Culvert Working Group, a partnership for fish passage in the watershed, includes SRSC, the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, and Skagit and Snohomish counties.

The group has updated a catalog of known culverts in the watershed, detailing location, condition, and surrounding habitat potential in a database, which can be filtered to see the highest-benefit project sites. As of 2024, 558 barriers to fish passage were identified as limiting access to 276 miles of habitat. —*Kimberly Cauvel*

Estuary project essential for chinook

At Similk Bay on the south side of Fidalgo Island, a habitat restoration project is in the works that could help reverse the trend for the region's Endangered Species Act-listed chinook salmon population.

This fall, the Skagit River System Cooperative (SRSC), a natural resources agency of the Swinomish and Sauk-Suiattle tribes, completed the first phase of a project to restore a pocket estuary along the bay. When complete, the project will enable the salt water of Similk Bay to enter restored marsh and stream channels during high tides. This creates important refuge that juvenile chinook need in order to grow before migrating to the ocean.

This type of estuary habitat has been identified as a key limitation, or bottleneck, for recovering chinook. Research suggests that human development such as roads and dikes destroyed or disconnected an estimated 86% of historic estuary habitat in the Skagit River basin by the 1990s. That includes Satterlee Road and a protective beach berm along Similk Bay, where SRSC is working with the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Skagit County and other partners to reverse the damage.

Similk Bay is within the Swinomish Tribe's traditional homelands and adjacent to the tribe's reservation. It is integral to the Swinomish Shellfish Co.

and abuts Swinomish Golf Links, an enterprise of the tribe. Restoring salmon habitat within the bay supports the growth of fish populations and treaty harvests critical to the tribe's culture and economy.

"Our aim is the recovery of strong and sustainable tribal fisheries and the delisting of chinook salmon," said Colin Wahl, SRSC senior restoration ecologist.

When finished, the Similk Bay project will open about 18 acres of marsh to tidal influence and 1,400 feet of stream channels to fish. The tidal channel habitat alone could support more than 8,000 chinook smolts on their way from their natal rivers to sea.

"With the Similk restoration project, the Swinomish Tribe is providing an important leadership role in the restoration of essential estuary habitat that our

"Our aim is the recovery of strong and sustainable tribal fisheries and the delisting of chinook salmon."

Colin Wahl,
Senior Restoration Ecologist
Skagit River System Cooperative

chinook need," said Swinomish Chairman Steve Edwards.

In September and October, SRSC worked with Swinomish Golf Links to dig new stream channels and raise a fairway to protect it from tidal inundation resulting from the project. Three pedestrian bridges also were built over the stream channels to support golf course operations.

Completing the project will involve rebuilding Satterlee Road at an elevation to withstand the tides and sea level rise, building a bridge over a new 75-foot channel, and breaching the beach berm to connect the channel with the bay. The existing road relies on a pump drainage system and is subject to seasonal flooding that will worsen with climate change.

The project has been supported with \$5.8 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act funding through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Habitat Conservation and about \$2.3 million from the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office. Additional funding is needed to complete construction.

More information about the project is available at similkrestoration.com.

—*Kimberly Cauvel*



An aerial photo of the project site, left, and an artist's rendition of high tide conditions after the project is completed, right, show how a large refuge is expected to form, supporting juvenile chinook. *Skagit River System Cooperative (2)*



Strong chum returns support treaty fishing

Skokomish tribal members exercised their treaty right this fall by harvesting chum salmon at Hoodspout in Hood Canal. As of November, in-season estimates indicated that chum were returning in larger numbers than expected, on a trajectory to reach above the forecast of about 818,000 fish.

Clockwise from top left: Skokomish tribal member Kevin Cagey lifts a chum from his net. Tribal member Elena Prest is splashed by chum fighting against her net. Siblings Elena Prest and Travis Prest Jr. haul in a beach seine. *Tiffany Royal (3)*



Students immersed in culture, career options



Tribal leaders are looking to the next generation to continue the work of recovering salmon, shellfish and wildlife populations.

Tackling that work requires sufficiently staffing hatcheries, habitat restoration crews, data-gathering teams and other natural resources management positions—and making sure tribal youth know these career opportunities exist.

“The strength of our tribes needs to be called upon if we’re going to win this battle, and if we can get our youth involved, I think then we can gain momentum,” said NWIFC Chairman Ed Johnstone.

“If we continue the fight, we keep hope alive,” said NWIFC Vice Chair Lisa Wilson.

In an effort to energize tribal youth about careers related to salmon recovery,

NWIFC and the Tulalip Tribes hosted a Native Youth Salmon Summit in mid-October. The two-day summit showcased career pathways into natural resources management work critical to sustaining salmon populations in the Pacific Northwest.

“The summit was very informative about the importance of salmon and how tribes utilize the salmon,” said Lummi Nation teen Aiyanna Brown. “I learned a lot.”

Nearly 70 students attended, with participants including members of nine NWIFC tribes—Lower Elwha Klallam, Lummi, Makah, Muckleshoot, Nisqually, Puyallup, Quinault, Squaxin Island and Tulalip—and other Native American tribes.

Tulalip elder and fisher Glen Gobin

welcomed the crowd and set the stage for summit activities on the first day.

“We are here today because of the value of salmon; the value of it as food and the value of it as culture,” Gobin said. “The salmon is what has grounded us, and to protect the environment where the salmon live is our biggest challenge today.”

Youth learned more about those challenges through activities along a slough in the Snohomish River estuary, and at the Tulalip Tribes’ marina, hatchery and Hibel Cultural Center.

“I enjoyed seeing my students learn through hands-on activities that were meaningful to them,” said Holly Keedy, a science teacher at Neah Bay High School.

Indigenous science professionals—a natural resources technician, a college student completing a tribal natural



resources management degree, a scientist with a federal agency, and a scientist with Tulalip—also shared their journeys into the workforce during a speaker series.

During a career fair with nearly 50 colleges, government agencies and non-profits, students further connected with professionals in salmon recovery and learned about job opportunities in natural resources.

Patricia Gardner said her sons, of Nisqually, learned they could work for tribes in a variety of capacities, and that federal jobs aren't the only option. One is preparing to study marine biology at college next fall.

“There are so many different types of jobs and there is no one single path,” one attendee commented on an anonymous feedback form for the event. “Everyone

has a different journey and there are multiple ways to support salmon and our communities.”

Summit participants enjoyed a salmon dinner, along with geoduck chowder made with shellfish donated by Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and desserts topped with huckleberries—a sampling of the traditional foods that natural resources management professionals work to protect.

Sponsors of the event included Salmon Defense, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Washington Sea Grant, Inatai Foundation, Kurt Grinnell Aquaculture Scholarship Foundation, USFWS Retirees Association and Battelle.

—NWIFC Communications Team

Clockwise from far left: Students get a look at critters from the nearshore during the estuary habitat session.

During the career fair, students “swim” alongside salmon in the Skagit River through a virtual reality program by Friends of the San Juans.

Tulalip and NOAA Fisheries staff demonstrate beach seining at Ebey Waterfront Park.

Glen Gobin, Tulalip Tribes elder and fisher, welcome participants to the summit.

Arielle Valencia, left, junior chairwoman of the Tulalip Youth Council, and Jose Rocha experiment with dissecting salmon smolts at the tribe's hatchery.

A salmon swims in a tank during the estuary habitat session. NWIFC staff and attendees (6)



Left: Jack Simmons, right, and Ethan Wells gain hands-on experience at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park under a partnership with the Nisqually Indian Tribe.

Below: Nisqually tribal member Joey Henry prepares to feed animals at the park.

Northwest Trek Wildlife Park (2)

Wildlife park introduces tribal fellowship role

A partnership between the Nisqually Indian Tribe and Northwest Trek Wildlife Park grew stronger this year when tribal elder Rose Wells became the park's first nature engagement fellow.

The role allowed Wells to mentor tribal youth as they worked at the park, learning about its operations and potential careers working with nature and animals.

The position grew out of conversations between Nisqually elder David Stepetin, who helped initiate the partnership between the tribe and park, and Northwest Trek's nature engagement curator Craig Standridge. After years of discussion, the position was funded for one year through Woodland Park Zoo's Building Organizational Capacity to Foster Empathy for Wildlife Grant Program.

Standridge was eager to establish more space for Indigenous knowledge and experience at the park.

"I wanted us to give back," he said. "It's about moving beyond land acknowledgments and actually doing something."

Once the new fellowship was established, they found an appropriate fellow in Wells, who worked with the Nisqually Tribal Council for years but wanted an opportunity to work with animals and nature.

Wells arranged guest speakers to educate Northwest Trek staff about the history of Chief Leschi, the tribe and the land. These conversations were recorded



and will be offered to future staffers.

Wells also worked with youth who volunteered at the park in July, exploring roles in facilities, education and animal care.

Under the guidance of Wells and other staffers, the youth planted trees, fed animals such as wolves and bears, and set up trail cameras and reviewed the footage.

Several of them are interested in careers dedicated to nature and caring for animals. Seeing that interest burgeon was one of the highlights of the position, Wells said.

While the position is currently funded for one year, Wells and Northwest Trek hope future funding will allow it to continue and perhaps become a rotating position for members of various tribes.

"Making the connection between our Nisqually students, the public and the animals of our traditional homelands is a win for all involved," said Nisqually Tribe Chairman Ken Choke. "We hope to see this program continue for years to come."

—Trevor Pyle

Partnership takes student science to the beach

When two students from Pioneer Middle School in Shelton picked their way across the tidelands of Little Skookum Inlet earlier this year, they were conducting an experiment—to see if they could protect oysters from heat exposure during low tides in the summer.

The students were retrieving oyster bags they'd designed, which also had temperature-measuring devices that would tell them if the bags worked.

The experiment is one of several that students performed thanks to a partnership with their teacher Timothy Smith, Little Skookum Shellfish Growers and the Squaxin Island Tribe.

Smith, a former researcher, said it's crucial to allow students to do science rather than just read about it.

"Imagine a basketball coach drilling, giving tests, but never letting his or her team play basketball," Smith said. "That's what almost all students experience through high school and even much of college. No



Milo Matsuda retrieves an experimental bag used to study potential protection of oysters from hot temperatures during low tides. *Trevor Pyle*

one puts you in a position to do science, to create new data."

Smith's philosophy was supported when he met Rana Brown, a shellfish biologist for the tribe. They teamed up to offer students real-world projects that would get them out of the classroom and into the field.

She had proposed to students several research topics,

including how shellfish could be protected from heat domes such as the one that killed billions of shellfish in Washington and British Columbia in 2021.

When students Milo Matsuda and Isabella York explored using insulated bags to protect oysters, Brown connected them with Brett Bishop, co-owner of Little Skookum

Shellfish Growers. He provided space and shellfish, and soon the experiment was underway.

"The students built the bags, they deployed them, they used the temperature devices," Smith said. "That's an amazing opportunity. If they set the goals, if they see the results, it changes lives." —*Trevor Pyle*

Class passes down salmon preservation practices



The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe's cultural resources department held a salmon smoking and canning class this fall. Elder Gene Jones taught students how to fillet coho salmon provided by the tribe's hatchery. Students hung the fillets in the tribe's smokehouse, then cut the smoked salmon into chunks and tucked them into jars for canning. The canned salmon will be given as gifts. From left to right, tribal members Valorie Bryant, Ella Hjert and Laura Price participated in the lessons.

"It's a really proud moment for us to continue this kind of tradition, keeping our families fed through traditional means," said Price, the tribe's cultural resources director. *Tiffany Royal (3)*

Coho again support treaty fishing on Elwha River



For the second year in a row, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe has been able to exercise its treaty right to harvest coho salmon from the Elwha River after the removal of two fish-blocking dams.

A ceremonial and subsistence fishery for tribal members opened in fall 2023 and fall 2024 following years of evaluation using tools including sonar, redd surveys, snorkel surveys, tangle net surveys and smolt trapping.

In 2023, the tribe harvested 177 coho. In 2024, the tribe harvested 189 of the fish.

Using data from 2023, the tribe was able to open the fishery two weeks earlier in 2024, in September, without affecting the end of the chinook run in the river, though weather events impacted how much tribal members fished.

“Fishing effort was slightly down compared to the first year; we had some significant rain events this year which affected the fishery and reduced effort,” said Lane Jackson, the tribe’s fisheries management biologist.

Provided that the pre-season forecast allows it, the tribe plans to continue its ceremonial and subsistence coho fishery in 2025 and is meeting with community members to solicit feedback and continue to improve the fishery, Jackson said.

At the start of dam removal in 2011, the tribe, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Olympic National Park voluntarily suspended fishing to allow salmon populations to recolonize their former habitat and rebuild their populations. —*Tiffany Royal*

Lower Elwha Klallam tribal members Leilani Barkley, left, and son Justice Wells fish for coho salmon in the Elwha River in October 2023. *Tiffany Royal*

Estuary restoration efforts working, data shows

After investing millions of dollars to restore the Skokomish estuary, the Skokomish Tribe is monitoring the habitat to measure its success.

The tribe purchased and restored nearly 400 acres in the estuary starting in 2007, after the property operated as a farm and a private hunting club for nearly 80 years.

“Salmon need estuaries to grow,” said Lisa Belleveau, the tribe’s habitat biologist. “If they don’t have a healthy estuary to grow in before they head out to the ocean, their likelihood of being able to survive ocean conditions and return as adults is low.”

The tribe monitors 15 sites throughout the estuary and at reference marshes, observing the plants present, salinity levels in the soil, and how the estuary has increased or decreased in elevation according to the height of the sediment.

“Sediment helps build elevation that creates an environment capable of supporting salt marsh vegetation,” Belleveau said.

The biggest takeaway has been how fast



Skokomish habitat biologist Lisa Belleveau, left, and habitat technician Shae Holy monitor vegetation growth and sediment deposit in the Skokomish estuary. *Tiffany Royal*

things have changed and adapted in the estuary, she said.

After the first four years of monitoring, by 2015 the estuary vegetation had started to resemble adjacent reference marshes and continues to do so, she said.

As for salmon, data shows that fish are using the restoration areas, said Kevin Swager, the tribe’s finfish biologist.

“We do find most of the salmonid species in those areas in the estuary,” he said.

—*Tiffany Royal*



Above: Skokomish Tribe restoration biologist Alex Papiez prepares a drone outfitted with a camera to fly over a section of the upper South Fork Skokomish River.

Left: Shae Holy, left, a habitat technician for the Skokomish Tribe, measures the width of a channel on the upper South Fork Skokomish River with help from U.S. Forest Service hydro technician Kassandra Grimm and fish biologist Marc McHenry. *Tiffany Royal (2)*

River reach gets closeup restoration monitoring

The Skokomish Tribe is gathering detailed data on how the upper South Fork Skokomish River is responding following more than a decade of salmon habitat restoration.

“The upper South Fork is basically 14 miles of nice channel and floodplain habitat that’s ideal for juvenile salmon rearing and adult salmon spawning,” said Alex Papiez, the tribe’s restoration biologist. “You have room laterally across the floodplain for eventual wetlands, backwater habitat and riparian vegetation. It’s this biodiversity hot spot that’s important for the life history of salmon.”

The tribe, with help of the U.S. Forest Service, mapped the 14 miles this summer, from valley wall to valley wall. They collected data about the river channel, floodplain and riparian forest, using traditional field surveys with GPS tools to get highly accurate positioning data and drone surveys to capture

LIDAR and high-resolution images of the current habitat—images so detailed that Papiez said biologists could count pebbles on the riverbanks to determine river sediment size classes.

Biologists also conducted on-the-ground pebble counts, surveyed cross sections of the river to track the shape and size of river channels through time, and measured pools for depth, a habitat feature that salmon need for resting and hiding from predators.

The data gathering is twofold: to monitor areas that have been restored and to get pre-project data for areas that will be restored in the next few years. The goal is to track changes over time, including channel and floodplain response to engineered logjam placement and supplemental wood.

Restoring the upper South Fork has been a focus for the tribe as part of its effort to restore the spring chinook

salmon population in the river. The salmon were known to spawn in this reach, along with steelhead and bull trout, but were extirpated in the second half of the 20th century.

Since 2016, juvenile spring chinook have been reintroduced to the river through releases from the North Fork Skokomish Salmon Hatchery operated by Tacoma Power near Lake Kokanee, while juvenile salmon have been released into the upper South Fork near LeBar Creek the past few years.

“For spring chinook up there, we want good spawning gravels, deep pools with cover over them, multiple channels with mature vegetated islands and lots of large wood,” Papiez said. “We’re not trying to return the river to a fixed state but are focused on restoring the processes that maintain these habitat features.”

Restoration of the upper South Fork reach started in 2010. The next phase, starting

in summer 2025, will include more engineered logjams plus wood pieces that can be moved by the river to help form additional logjams.

About 80% of the South Fork Skokomish River subbasin was clear cut in the 20th century, which removed old growth forests that regulated sediment supply, reducing runoff to the river.

Starting in 2014, the U.S. Forest Service, in partnership with the tribe, Mason Conservation District and other landowners, started decommissioning logging roads and working to restore salmon habitat in the South Fork.

“It’s valuable habitat because there’s a lot of floodplain and minimal human infrastructure,” Papiez said. “The South Fork is a naturally dynamic and really powerful river, and so it can move a lot of wood and sediment.” —*Tiffany Royal*

Tribal fishing fleet will get new pier

Lummi Nation's fishing fleet is set to receive a new pier and docking equipment to support treaty fishing operations for salmon, halibut, crab and other shellfish.

The tribe was awarded nearly \$11 million in federal funding in November for the upgrades, called the Fisherman's Cove Dock Replacement Project. The project includes demolition and replacement of a pier at Lummi's Fisherman's Cove Marina, as well as installation of a new electric lift and four cranes.

The Fisherman's Cove infrastructure upgrades will directly support Lummi fishers and improve their continued access to the Salish Sea, said Lummi Chairman Anthony Hillaire.

"This project not only safeguards our fishing practices but also aligns with our values of protecting and sustaining the natural resources that support our way of life," he said.



The Lummi Island ferry dock and neighboring piers are seen from across Fisherman's Cove along the Lummi Reservation. Lummi Nation will soon replace its pier and docking infrastructure adjacent to the ferry dock to better support its tribal fishing fleet. *Kimberly Cauvel*

The current pier is inadequate for serving Lummi's 450-plus fishing boats—regarded as the largest tribal fleet in the world.

U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen, who helped secure the funding for the project, said

the new Fisherman's Cove infrastructure will be equipped for larger vessels and will add rail access so fishers can more easily move their catches from the waterfront to market. —*Kimberly Cauvel*

Partners celebrate new tribal fish rearing building

The Suquamish Tribe celebrated upgrades at its Gorst fish rearing facility in September with its partners the city of Bremerton, Kitsap Poggie Club and U.S. Navy.

A new office building was constructed for the staff, which has been working out of a 360-square-foot two-room building with no toilet for decades. The new office space is a 700-square-foot building with a full kitchen, a bathroom and rooms that serve as offices and storage.

At the Gorst facility, the tribe rears chinook smolts that are transferred from the state's Minter Creek hatchery and the tribe's Grovers Creek hatchery, as well as coho salmon from Minter Creek.

The fish are released from Gorst into nearby Sinclair Inlet to provide fishing for tribal members and sport fishers.

Coho smolts at Gorst also are used to fill the tribe's netpens in

Agate Pass every winter to provide more fishing opportunities for tribal members and sport fishers in central Puget Sound.

"This facility creates a huge opportunity for not only tribal members who have been exercising their treaty rights, but also for sportfishermen and those all the way out to the ocean who intercept these fish," said Rob Purser, the tribe's fisheries director.

The tribe and the city have been partners since the tribe took over managing the facility from the state in the mid-1970s. In addition, former Suquamish Tribe biologist Paul Dorn fostered relationships with local agencies and groups, including the Kitsap Poggie Club whose members continue to volunteer at the tribe's Gorst and Grovers Creek facilities during fish transfer and spawning.

—*Tiffany Royal*



Suquamish Tribe Chairman Leonard Forsman speaks at the celebration for the new Gorst facility while Bremerton Mayor Greg Wheeler looks on. *Photo provided by Heather Johnson*



Tribe examines crab conditions before fishing

Fisheries staff from Quinault Indian Nation's Division of Natural Resources conducted a Dungeness crab test fishery in October, a crucial step for determining whether the tribe's commercial crab fishery is ready to open.

Every year, tribal fisheries staff set out crab pots, then pull them up after a 48-hour soak.

Fisheries staff inspect the crab's shells to see if they're soft or hard. A soft shell means the crab has not yet grown a protective shell after molting its old one. A hard shell means the crab is further along in its shell-growing stage and closer to being harvestable.

The crab are then turned over to a processor who determines how much of the crab by weight consists of meat. That rate must be 23% or higher—combined with more than half of the crab being hard-shelled—for the fishery to be opened.

"We test crab to see if they're marketable so we can open up our fisheries," said Scott Mazzone, the tribe's shellfish and marine fish biologist. "If there's not enough meat in the crab, they won't sell for a good price. Fishermen don't want to fish for crab under those circumstances."

The tribe coordinates its survey with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The tribe and state set crab pots at different depths and locations to cover a wider range. The surveys follow protocol established under a tri-state agreement with Washington, Oregon and California.

The October test fishery indicated that the crab were not quite ready for harvest. Fisheries staff planned to conduct another test a few weeks later. —Trevor Pyle



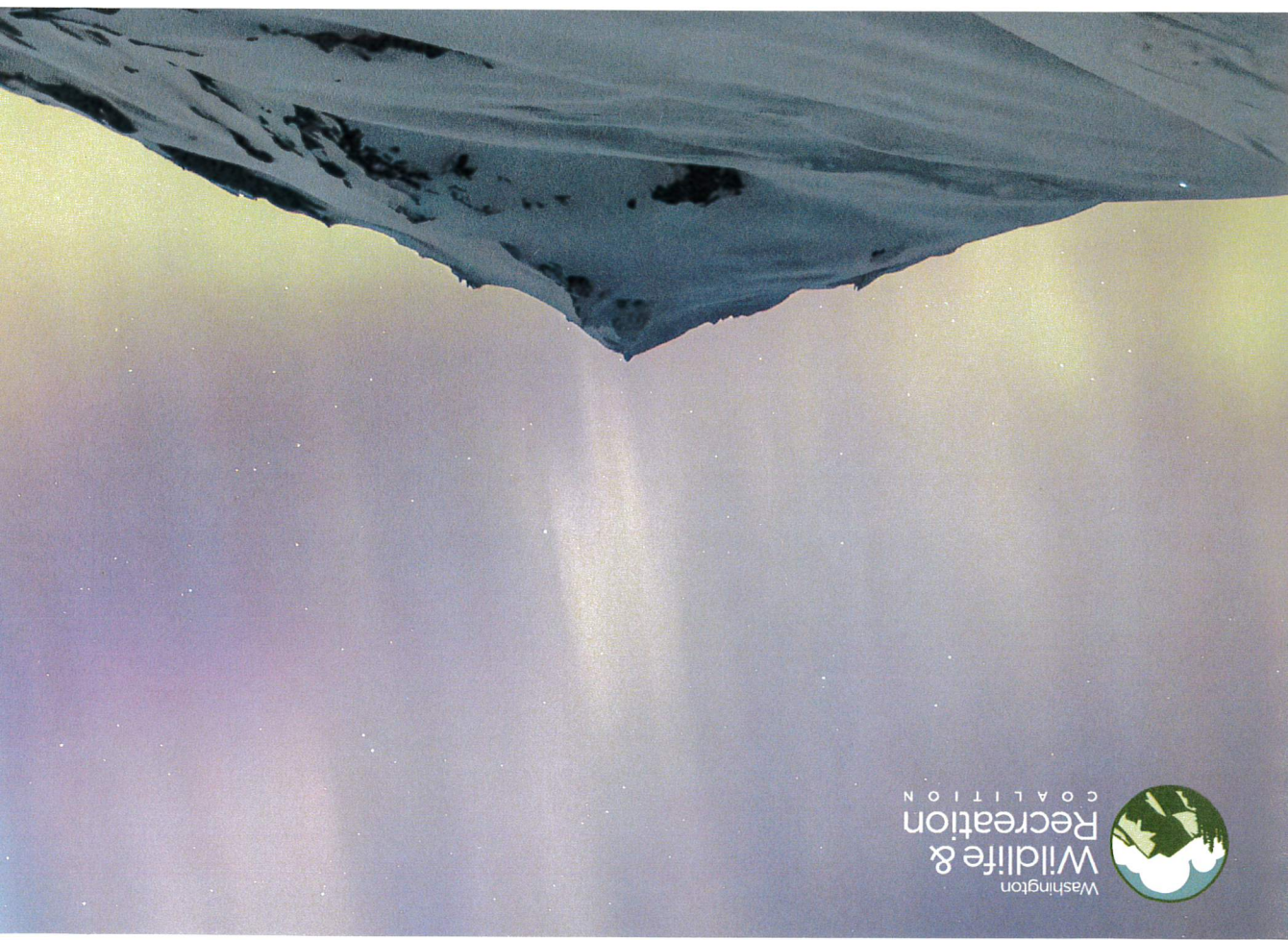
Top: Pacific Seafoods staff assist the Quinault Indian Nation with surveying and crab offloading.

Above: Crab caught for the tribe's survey. Trevor Pyle (2)

SEVEN GENERATIONS

Muckleshoot women cook fish on the reservation in the 1950s. From left to right: Alice Williams, Annie Garrison, Nevah Jackson Moses, Genevieve Siddle John, Elvina (Bena) Williams, Laura Siddle Courville and Irene Siddle. *Muckleshoot Indian Tribe Preservation Program*





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