

## 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:

<b>Michael Shiosaki,</b> Chair	Seattle	<b>Bob Bugert</b>	Leavenworth
<b>Shiloh Burgess</b>	Wenatchee	<b>Kristen Ohlson-Kiehn</b>	Designee, Department of Natural Resources
<b>Trang Lam</b>	Camas	<b>Amy Windrope</b>	Designee, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
<b>Kitty Craig</b>	Seattle	<b>Peter Herzog</b>	Designee; Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

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

### Call to Order:

**Chair 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. Milliarn 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](http://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**

Approved by:



Michael Shiosaki, Chair