



GOVERNOR'S PARKS & OUTDOOR RECREATION
TASK FORCE | DRAFT REPORT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

August 2014

***Outdoor recreation
begins at our
front door.***

Acknowledgements

The following recommendations are the result of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation. The 29 members were supported throughout the six month process by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office and their consultant partners. We wish to thank the task force members, stakeholders and the public for their time and commitment to this process. The collective insight and perspective is captured in this report.

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Task Force Invites Public Comment on the Draft through September 4, 2014

We are nearing the end of our 6-month process, as task force members focus on their draft recommendations due to the Governor by September 4. The final report is due by September 19.

The Recreation and Conservation Office distributed this draft report to task force members, and posted it on the task force Web page (www.rco.wa.gov/boards/TaskForceDocs.shtml) for a 10-day public comment period, beginning August 26. Interested parties are invited to submit comments on the draft to policychanges@rco.wa.gov by 5:00 PM, September 4.

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Governor Jay Inslee created a Blue Ribbon Task Force in 2014 to develop a transformation strategy for outdoor recreation in Washington State. The Task Force's mandate was to develop an action plan and issue recommendations to transform Washington's outdoor recreation assets and state programs.

Based on five public meetings and over 3,000 public comments, the Task Force recommends nine near-term actions to increase outdoor recreation activities as well as promote the jobs and businesses associated with outdoor recreation. In addition, the Task Force considered over 40 other viable actions, which are included in the "Recommendations for the Future" and "Recommendations for Federal Lands" sections below, and in Appendix VII.

Near-Term Actions

- Action #1:** Establish an office to serve as the state's cross-agency leader on outdoor recreation. (p. 5)
- Action #2:** Provide funding for the No Child Left Inside grant program. (p. 6)
- Action #3:** Include outdoor recreation into the K-12 core curriculum incorporating physical education, scientific inquiry, technology, environmental and physical sciences and public service. (p. 7)
- Action #4:** Enact the Marine Tourism Legislation. (p. 7)
- Action #5:** Designate "outdoor recreation" as a specific industry cluster within Washington's economic development strategy. (p. 8)
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- Action #7:** Fund the Youth Athletic Facilities grant program. (p. 10)
- Action #8:** Retain current law (and repeal the sunset provision) so that the real estate excise tax can continue to be used for local parks maintenance. (p. 11)
- Action #9:** Continue to fund and protect current outdoor recreation grant programs, such as the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Boating Facilities Program, Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicles Account and others administered by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. (p. 11)

Draft Report for Public Comment

Setting the Context

Outdoor recreation begins at our front door: riding off on our bicycle, tossing the ball around with the neighborhood kids, walking with friends and perhaps an eager furry companion. From this gateway, our recreation pursuits grow with organized sporting activities, family camping outings, and adventures in the outdoors on foot, on horseback, on mountain bikes and on motorized vehicles. Outdoor recreation strengthens families and builds communities. It fosters physical and mental fitness and health. It builds self-esteem, teaches problem solving and leadership skills, provides enjoyment and spiritual fulfillment. Outdoor recreation is therapeutic, providing an escape from stressful daily activities.

Outdoor recreation is not just fun and games. Outdoor recreation is essential to who we are, to our quality of life, and it strengthens our sense of what it means to be a community.

When a person recreates outdoors, it results in more than a personal benefit. It benefits all of society, translating into reductions in health care costs, reductions in absenteeism in the work place, and decreases in juvenile crime. Recreating outside leads to people placing a value on natural places and a believing it is important to keep them available for today's and future generations.

Outdoor recreation is also a huge stimulus to our economy. Buying those walking shoes, back packs, tennis rackets, fishing rods, boats and snowmobiles provides thousands of jobs in manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing. The economic impact to Washington from the recreation and tourism industry is huge. Travel for recreation boosts the economy of those gateway communities through the purchase of gas, food, accommodations and services.

We stand poised at a critical moment in time. We can and must act now to ensure the stewardship of our parks and public lands, to inspire our children to live a life grounded in experiencing recreation in the great outdoors and to nurture a vital and growing business sector. This was the premise when Governor Inslee established the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation. We journeyed around the state, listened to people who took time out of busy lives to show up and speak up, and read literally thousands of comments submitted via email and through an online town hall.

What we heard universally confirmed the importance of acting now before the very qualities that make Washington the great state we love are lost. Everything we stand to gain from bold, transformational initiatives is also everything we stand to lose if we do not demonstrate leadership and commitment:

- **Healthier people:** Experiencing and recreating in the outdoors contributes to both mental and physical health for everyone from our children to returning veterans and aging Baby Boomers.
- **Stronger communities:** Communities that invest in parks, trails and other outdoor spaces offer the quality of life that helps every resident thrive, and gives them a competitive edge in the quest for business creation, recruitment, and retention.
- **Thriving economy:** From research to manufacturing to retail sales to services, an entire business spectrum rests on the quality of our parks, public lands, and recreational opportunities. Not only does recreation support direct employment-it also serves as a star attraction for recruitment of new

businesses and the talented workforce needed to build every business sector. Washington residents essentially receive a "second paycheck" in the form of our unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities.

This is why the Task Force recommends to Governor Inslee that he lead these initiatives that call on the state to invest its attention and state funding in protecting and enhancing the value of outdoor recreation to the state's bottom line and the state's quality of life. Washington simply would not be Washington without its great outdoors and abundant recreational opportunities.

When we began our work on this task force, we knew some of the challenges to the future of our parks and outdoor spaces. We expected to identify barriers that keep people from getting outdoors, issues of coordination between levels of government, opportunities lost and assets diminished through lack of funding. What we did not fully realize was the extent to which we would discover an economic powerhouse—the outdoor engine of the Washington economy.

Washingtonians from every part of the state and from every background share our passion for the outdoors and for all that the outdoors contributes to our economy and quality of life. We heard from thousands of residents that we must not take this for granted. If we do, our personal health, our businesses, our cities and towns, and our entire state will suffer the consequences. Future generations will ask us how we could have wasted such an incredible opportunity. And it is incredible. Washington is one of the most beautiful states in the nation and showcases a wide and wild profusion of mountains, forests, grasslands, islands, beaches, parks and every type of water, from lakes and rivers to the Puget Sound and the Pacific coast. Our outdoor spaces inspire us to move, to gaze, to explore and experience.

That is, the outdoors inspires us if we can find time and access; if we have the means to travel safely and conveniently; if we have had the opportunity to learn to camp, fish, snowshoe, ride a horse, bike, snowmobile or climb; and if those places are open and available rather than closed for lack of maintenance. These are the threats we heard while identifying strengths and opportunities that abound.

The threats are quite real. Washington is growing rapidly on every front, placing a strain on outdoor spaces already stressed by fiscal and policy constraints that threaten our recreation infrastructure and outdoor programs.

Just as we invest in education, transportation, and other contributors to our state's economy affected by robust growth, we must recognize that Washington's outdoors—and our enjoyment of it—represent one of the state's most significant assets. Businesses choose to locate and grow here, talented and hardworking people choose to live and contribute here, in no small part because they get an extra return on their investment every day from our outdoor spaces and our natural assets. Our parks and outdoor opportunities make people healthy and provide jobs across the state.

One of the common themes we heard is that providing outdoor recreation opportunities should be seen as an essential government service—as important as providing transportation, police and fire protection. And there are many ways that federal, state and local governments can improve those services to make them easier to access, more available to users, as well as more attractive to people who, for whatever reason, are

not taking advantage of them. Improving services will require a range of actions, including providing strong leadership to changing policies and programs administered by public recreation providers and state funding priorities. Some actions can and should be accomplished soon, while others will require additional planning in order to be implemented in the next three to five years.

To increase the participation in outdoor recreation and the resulting social and economic benefits, the Task Force identified five priority action areas:

- Lead the Way to Outdoor Recreation
- Inspire an Outdoor Recreation Culture
- Open More Outdoor Recreation Opportunities
- Grow the Outdoor Recreation Economy
- Sustain Our Outdoor Recreation Assets

This report presents Task Force recommendations within three strategic themes: "Priority Near-Term Actions," "Recommendations for the Future," and "Recommendations for Federal Lands."

Priority Near-Term Actions

Lead the Way to Outdoor Recreation

The Task Force finds a huge need for communication, coordination and advocacy across local, state, federal, tribal and nongovernmental providers of outdoor recreation—including those who provide access to public lands, facilities and programs and those who promote outdoor recreation.

ACTION #1: Establish an office to serve as the state's cross-agency leader on outdoor recreation.

To meet these needs, the Task Force recommends that the State of Washington establish an office to serve as the state's cross-agency leader on outdoor recreation. This office should be located within either the Department of Commerce or the Recreation and Conservation Office, or a hybrid of both agencies.

The new office will communicate, coordinate and advocate across jurisdictional boundaries and among all types of recreation service providers. Such an entity would:

- Increase and better coordinate the promotion of Washington's diverse outdoor recreation opportunities to attract more travelers from out of the country, across the nation and within Washington, and to show that our amazing quality-of-life is a great reason to build businesses and families here.
- Work with tourism organizations to upgrade tourism marketing to more explicitly feature outdoor recreation opportunities similar to what is done in Utah.
- Collaborate with public health and healthcare providers to promote outdoor recreation as a way to improve health and reduce healthcare costs.
- Collaborate with non-governmental organizations that provide outdoor recreation experiences to underserved communities to help the organizations be more effective.
- Work with transportation and urban planners to create healthier, greener, bikable, and walkable communities.

IDAHO RECREATION & TOURISM INITIATIVE

The Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI) is a coalition of six state and five federal agencies, three nonprofit associations and the University of Idaho. Its main purpose is to develop partnerships with all interested entities in order to improve recreation and tourism services. It is governed by steering committee comprised of one representative from each partner agency, with the coordinator housed in the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.

An important product of the IRTI was to produce a memorandum of understanding, signed by each of the partner agencies and entities, that documents how they will work together to achieve the agreed-to recreation and tourism goals.

IRTI also lead in the development of Be Outside Idaho (BOI), an organization "which includes over 150 partners—federal, state, and municipal agencies, and private organizations and businesses. Its mission is to connect children with nature in Idaho, from backyards to mountaintops. BIO (www.beoutsideidaho.org) serves as a clearinghouse for kids and nature activities throughout the state.

- Work with all state agencies, beyond those already involved in recreation, to instill an outdoor recreation approach to meeting specific agency goals wherever possible.
- Guide conservation and habitat investments in ways that also support outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Work with state and federal land managers to address barriers to accessing recreation lands—some examples include permit limitations for commercial and nonprofit groups and events, access passes, road closures and other access barriers.
- Provide the organizational mechanism to oversee the further refinement and implementation of this action plan, as required in the Governor’s Executive Order.

The office would act as a convener and administrator for an advisory committee composed of government, non-profit and private recreation providers, tourism alliances, and recreation businesses, which would meet on a regular basis and host an annual Outdoor Recreation Summit.

Inspire an Outdoor Recreation Culture

The Task Force finds that Washington state youth and other underserved populations, such as racial and ethnic minorities, the economically disadvantaged, people with disabilities, veterans, and the elderly are not getting outdoors. The reasons include lack of knowledge of outdoor recreation opportunities, busy schedules, competition with indoor activities, lack of programs and events targeted at underserved populations, and lack of recreational opportunities that meet today's needs in a society undergoing significant social, demographic and economic changes.

Reasons for not participating in outdoor recreation also include barriers such as cost, lack of transportation, and difficulty in obtaining permits for group access and events on federal land.

To inspire an outdoor recreation culture, the Task Force recognizes it is important to involve families, not just individuals. Young people often experience the outdoors for the first time with their parents. Conversely, young people who experience the outdoors through school and other programs provide incentives for the entire family to engage in outdoor recreation activities. Programs that attract all family members can instill a life-long love of the outdoors and an understanding of the importance of outdoor recreation to their physical and mental fitness.

ACTION #2: Provide funding for the No Child Left Inside grant program.

As an immediate, high priority action, the Task Force recommends that the Washington State Legislature provide funding for the No Child Left Inside grant program. The purpose of this program is to provide funds for outdoor environmental, ecological, agricultural, or other natural resource based education and recreation

NORTH CENTRAL ATV CLUB

The North Central ATV (All-Terrain Vehicle) Club has over 200 family memberships and provides activities for the all ages and abilities. In addition to family riding events, the club provides education on responsible riding on public lands, engages in campground cleanups, trail maintenance, and search and rescue, and facilitates activities for people with disabilities.

programs serving youth. The program was enacted by the Washington State Legislature in 2008, which provided \$1.5 million for the 2007-2009 biennium. The program has not been funded since then.

ACTION #3: Include outdoor recreation into the K-12 core curriculum incorporating physical education, scientific inquiry, technology, environmental and physical sciences and public service.

The Task Force also strongly recommends that outdoor education be included in the K-12 core curriculum, incorporating physical education, scientific inquiry, technology, environmental and physical sciences and public service.

Other Task Force recommendations to promote outdoor experiences and increase environmental awareness for youth, families, and adults, and provide incentives and opportunities for populations under-represented in outdoor recreation participation are addressed below under "Recommendations for the Future."

Open More Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

The Task Force finds that there is a need to reduce or remove barriers to accessing recreational opportunities and to improve the predictability and ease of accessing recreation lands and opportunities. Barriers include state tax policy; federal permitting for group access, events and for commercial outfitters; access fees; road closures on federal and state lands, and closure of private lands—primarily timberlands—to fishing and hunting.

ACTION #4: Enact the Marine Tourism legislation.

As a short-term objective, the Task Force strongly encourages that the Washington State Legislature enact the Marine Tourism legislation. This would change the state use tax policy that currently discourages owners of large boats to seek repair work from Washington businesses or to recreate for longer periods of time in Washington waters.

The Task Force recommends that the barriers listed above regarding federal permitting be addressed by the state outdoor recreation office recommended in the "Lead the Way" section above.

Specific recommendations regarding access passes are discussed in the "Sustain Our Outdoor Recreation Resources" section below.

TAHOMA HIGH OUTDOOR ACADEMY

In 2004 Tahoma High teachers developed a year-long course that combines science, language arts and physical fitness. Students participate in fly fishing, study river ecology, engage in hiking, mountain biking, trail building, tree planting and rock climbing. Activities combine writing, scientific investigation and physical education.

MARINE TOURISM LEGISLATION

Currently, a boat owned by a nonresident business entity, such as a corporation, limited liability company, or partnership, is not eligible to receive a use permit exempting the boat from paying Washington sales and use taxes and allowing the boat to remain in Washington beyond 60 days without obtaining Washington registration.

The Marine Tourism bill (SB 5241 in the 2014 legislative session) will extend the availability of use permits to nonresident business entities, allowing the vessel to remain in Washington for up to six months. This will remove the disincentive for nonresident business boat owners to visit and stay in Washington harbors.

Grow the Outdoor Recreation Economy

Outdoor recreation is a major contributor to Washington's economy. A study conducted by the Outdoor Industry Foundation found that in 2012, outdoor recreation in Washington resulted in \$22.5 billion in consumer expenditures, producing 227,000 jobs, and generating \$1.6 billion in state and local tax revenues.¹ For perspective, the gross domestic product for Washington State in 2012 was \$376 billion.

Data on consumer spending is gathered and reported by the state and federal government, categorized by industry sector. For example, retail sales data are categorized by the type of business, so sales data from department stores are reported as a single number. Thus it is not possible to separate sales of, for example, kitchen appliances and sporting goods. To quantify spending associated with outdoor recreation requires determining the recreation-related portion of sales from a number of different industry sectors, including restaurants, gas stations, lodging facilities and department stores. This is currently being done nationally by the Bureau of Economic Analysis and by some states for travel- and tourism-related spending. In Washington, consumer spending on outdoor recreation has to be estimated through use of special surveys and econometric models.

ACTION #5: Designate "outdoor recreation" as a specific industry within Washington's economic development strategy.

The Task Force strongly recommends that Washington State designate "outdoor recreation" as a specific industry within Washington's economic development strategy. Economic data from this industry cluster will help public officials understand the importance of outdoor recreation to the state and local economies and to take this into consideration when budgeting for marketing and promotion of tourism opportunities and planning recreation-related infrastructure.

The Task Force also recognizes the need for improved marketing and promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities and the need to inform policy makers and the public about the benefits of outdoor recreation to health, fitness, and Washingtonians' overall quality of life. Coordination and improvement of marketing and promotion is suggested as one objective of the state outdoor recreation office recommended in the "Lead the Way" section above.

Sustain Our Outdoor Recreation Assets

The Task Force examined the revenue sources and funding needs for operations of recreation lands, facilities and programs provided by State Parks and the Departments of Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resources. Some funding for general operation, maintenance and special programs comes from the state general funds, but over the last decade the legislature has shifted funding for these three agencies to one based primarily on user fees from passes, permits and licenses.

As discussed in the introduction, Task Force members strongly believe that providing outdoor recreation opportunities is an essential government service due to the tremendous social, health and economic benefits to not only participants in outdoor recreation, but to their families, communities, and the state as a

¹ Outdoor Industry Association, 2012.

whole. That said, the Task Force also recognizes that individual users of public outdoor recreation facilities should, in some instances, meet some of the costs necessary to support the lands, facilities, or programs being used.

The Task Force recommends both a re-balancing of the public share of investment in outdoor recreation and finding new funding sources to not only make up the current funding shortfalls, but to set the state on a course of fully funding the state’s outdoor recreation needs. The Task Force endorses the funding approach used by the Fort Worden Development Authority, which oversees operation of the Lifelong Learning Center and other facilities at Fort Worden State Park. The Authority’s business plan divides park services into three categories: essential, important, and value added² and identifies “who pays” based on “who benefits.” Essential services benefit all of the public; important services benefit people using the services but the services benefit the general public as well; value added services primarily benefit those using the service. Table 1 provides examples of activities from the business plan that fall into each of these categories.

Table 1: Fort Worden Development Authority Business Plan Example

<i>Type of program</i>	<i>Who benefits</i>	<i>Who pays</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Essential	All the public	The public through the tax system; no user charges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural and cultural resource protection • Facility, infrastructure, grounds maintenance • Passive interpretation and education • Public safety and emergency services • Administrative services
Important	Individuals who participate benefit but community members benefit somehow	Individual users pay partial costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural and cultural resource restoration • Active interpretation and education programs • Developed camping area management
Value Added	Individual who participates	Individual users pay full costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor and nature center management and operation • Special event planning and management • Food services • Merchandising

The Task Force endorses this general approach to re-balancing the public share of investment in outdoor recreation and when developing funding strategies for public outdoor recreation lands, facilities and programs, keeping in mind the importance of not erecting financial barriers to underserved populations. State Parks recognized the need for a similar approach in its State of State Parks report to the Office of

² Dave Robison in a presentation to the Task Force, August 19, 2014.

Financial Management in 2012. This approach will require the three state agencies to assess what parts of their current operations are essential, important or value added so that a re-balancing can be addressed.

The Discover Pass is a major source of revenue for operation of the Washington State Park system and other state recreation lands. Actual revenues have been less than anticipated, but are showing signs of increasing. There appears to be significant public discontent with the Discover Pass, based on confusion on when it is required, where it can be purchased, the cost, perceptions of draconian enforcement, and confusion about federal and state requirements. The most frequent comments received by the Task Force through its Engage Washington website pertained to dissatisfaction with the Discover Pass and a recommendation that it be abolished. People testifying at Task Force meetings also expressed their dissatisfaction with the Discover Pass. This was especially noted in Wenatchee, where it appears that use of the Confluence State Park by locals has dropped off due to need for the Discover Pass.

The Task Force believes that requiring everyone using our state parks or other state recreation land to pay for a pass is an impediment to some people, and is contrary to the goal of getting more people, especially underserved populations, outdoors. However, the Task Force also recognizes that until a more suitable alternative is adopted, the pass is necessary to keep state recreation lands open and facilities and programs operating.

Ideas for improving the way in which the Discover Pass can be purchased, enhancing Discover Pass sales and other revenues, and developing new revenue sources are presented below.

The Task Force noted that funding for local and regional parks has also diminished, in part due to the recent economic recession. Local government officials emphatically pointed out the need for funding for new facilities, renovation of existing facilities, maintenance and operation, and programs.

Task Force strongly recommends four near-term actions to address the funding shortfall:

- **ACTION #6:** Conduct an assessment of the current operations of Washington State Parks, and the Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife to determine what parts are essential, important or value added so that a re-balancing of the public investment can be addressed.
- **ACTION #7:** Fund the Youth Athletic Facilities grant program.

DISCOVER PASS

The pass provides visitors access to Washington state parks and to trails, wildlife and natural areas, heritage sites and water access points managed by the Departments of Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resources. The pass went into effect on July 1, 2011. An annual pass costs \$30 and a daily pass \$10. Biennial revenues from sales of the pass were projected at \$64 million, but actual income was about half that amount. However, revenues have increased from the first year of implementation, from \$15.7 million in FY 12 to a projected \$17.0 million in FY 2015. Revenues are divided between the three agencies.

YOUTH ATHLETIC FACILITIES

This grant program is administered by the Recreation and Conservation Office and provides funding to acquire, develop, equip, maintain, and improve community athletic facilities. The primary focus of the program is to meet the needs of people through the age of 18 who participate in sports and athletics.

- **ACTION #8:** Retain current law (RCW 82.46) and repeal the sunset clause, so that the real estate excise tax can continue to be used for local parks maintenance. This is scheduled to sunset December 31, 2016.
- **ACTION #9:** Continue to fund and protect current outdoor recreation grant programs, such as the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Boating Facilities Program, Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicles Account and others administered by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.

Recommendations for the Future

Inspiring an Outdoor Recreation Culture

In addition to the recommended near-term actions discussed in the previous chapter, the Task Force developed other, longer term recommendations to promote outdoor experiences and increase environmental awareness for youth, families, and adults, and to provide incentives and opportunities for populations under-represented in outdoor recreation participation.

1. Ensure integration of outdoor recreation into physical education programs in Washington schools, providing teachers with resources to connect an outdoor curriculum to the state-mandated Common Core learning standards. Evaluate and address the extent to which school districts are waiving the state-mandated health curriculum.
2. Establish, market, and promote events for youth—with a particular focus on diverse audiences, minority populations, and ethnic groups—in partnership with State Parks, schools, and nongovernmental program providers.
3. Increase promotion of programs such as Fish Washington help both retain and enhance fishing and hunting opportunities.
4. Offer start-up matching grants for establishing youth outdoor recreation programs in all corners of the state.
5. Offer challenge matching grants for youth outdoor recreation events.

The Task Force observed that the military community in Washington State is also an underserved population in regards to accessing outdoor recreation and outdoor-based therapeutic programs. Improved access to outdoor recreation and recreation programs will result in physical and mental health benefits for veterans, active duty service members, and their families.

The Task Force endorses the idea of a Washington Military Community Outdoor Recreation and Therapeutic Initiative: Boots in the Woods. The Boots in the Woods campaign would consist of a partnership between local, state, and federal government, nongovernmental organizations, and the military community to implement a comprehensive outdoor recreation and therapeutic program. A centralized organization would

CHILDREN'S OUTDOOR BILL OF RIGHTS

Twenty states have adopted a Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, including Oregon and California. California's COBR states that every child should have the opportunity to:

- Play in a safe place
- Explore Nature
- Learn to swim
- Go fishing
- Follow a trail
- Camp under the stars
- Ride a bike
- Go boating
- Connect with the past
- Plant a seed

WASHINGTON STATE'S MILITARY COMMUNITY

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs reports 602,272 veterans living in Washington State, with 461,678 (77%) being wartime vets, about 5% dating back to World War II. In addition, there are 69,125 active duty military personnel and 19,474 reservists.

provide a broad range of services, research, and community involvement in support of Washington State veterans, active duty personnel, National Guard, reserve service members, and their families. Specific recommendations were developed at the second annual Military Families and Veterans Action Summit³ in 2014 at IslandWood, a nonprofit organization dedicated to outdoor education, and are posted on the Task Force website under Boots in the Woods. See Appendix VII for details.

Opening More Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Barriers to access

The Task Force noted a number of barriers to accessing outdoor recreation opportunities, on both public and private land:

- Lack of easily accessible information
- Fees, passes, and tax policy
- Permit requirements
- Need for more public recreation land
- Closures of private land and some public land
- Government planning

Information

The Task Force recommends making access to public recreation lands more predictable by providing information on hunting seasons and land gate and road closures that is easily accessible and easier to understand. Cross-agency coordination of providing this information could be an objective of the recommended outdoor recreation office.

Fees, passes, and tax policy

As discussed above, many of the people submitting comments to the Task Force indicated that the Discover Pass is inconvenient to buy and can be a barrier to recreating on state lands. The Task Force recommends considering the following:

1. Conduct a formal study or analysis to look at how fees and passes are impacting recreational lands usage. The results will help guide future state policy decisions on the balance between supporting state recreation lands with user fees versus general funds as discussed above.
2. Provide a single pass good for all state and federal recreation parking areas. Consider using a windshield sticker or a pass placed on the vehicle's dashboard; make it transferrable; and offer it as part of a vehicle tab renewal in addition to existing points of sale.

³ <http://islandwood.org/military-families-and-veterans-action-summit>

3. Use independent contractors to sell and market the Discover Pass in bulk, more broadly, and at more outlets.
4. Improve the experience of purchasing the Discover Pass by making it more simple, quick, convenient and available before arrival at recreation sites.
5. Convert one-day pass buyers to annual pass customers.

MULTI-ENTITY RECREATION PASSES

Federal law (16 USC § 6804(e)) allows federal land-managing agencies to enter into agreement with governmental and nongovernmental entities to establish a single pass, sharing the costs and benefits. The law sunsets in 2014. For example, the Oregon Pacific Coast Passport pass provides access to all state and federal parks along the Oregon Coast. An annual Passport costs \$35, and a 5-day vehicle passport costs \$10.

Permit requirements

Obtaining permits for group use of federal recreation lands, events, and for commercial outfitters can be a barrier to recreational activities on these lands. These issues are discussed in the “Recommendations for Federal Lands” section below. Leadership on addressing these problems is a suggested objective of the state outdoor recreation office recommended in the “Lead the Way” section above.

Need for more public recreation land

The Task Force recommends acquiring lands where it is needed to facilitate access; yet doing so judiciously, on a needs-driven basis.

Land closures

Private lands and some public lands are closing to public use due to liability concerns, dumping of trash, road damage, fires, and property destruction. Some private landowners are responding by requiring high-priced permits for recreational access, even if it means waiving their liability immunity. The Task Force recommends the state work with private landowners to address problems and provide more incentives for them to allow public access, including modifying the state recreational immunity statutes. This could be coordinated by the proposed state outdoor recreation office. Access issues associated with national forest road closures are addressed in the “Recommendations for Federal Lands” section below.

Government Planning

Transportation, local parks, and planning agencies can enable and improve recreation through sensible planning, regulation, and investment. The Task Force recommends transportation investments that serve recreational purposes by evaluating permitting processes, encouraging cross-jurisdictional planning, and including access to recreational opportunities as a goal of the transportation system across all modes. Planners should explore creative partnerships and opportunities with cities, counties, tribes, and private land owners to identify new opportunities to expand access to recreation.

Growing the Outdoor Recreation Economy

The importance of outdoor recreation to state and local economies was discussed above. In addition to recommending that Washington State designate “outdoor recreation” as a specific industry, and the need for coordination and improvement of marketing and promotion (suggested as one objective of the proposed outdoor recreation office), the Task Force offers the following additional recommendations:

- Provide assistance to smaller towns in planning, designing, building and marketing outdoor recreation opportunities in their area, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations when appropriate.
- Continue to educate public officials that recreation can be a key contributor to the economic well-being of Washington and generates important benefits for public, community and environmental health.
- Increase and better coordinate the promotion of Washington's many, diverse recreation opportunities in order to attract more travelers from overseas, across the nation and within Washington, and to show that our amazing quality-of-life is a great reason to build businesses and families here. Utah offers a good example.

Sustaining Our Outdoor Recreation Assets

The Task Force recommended four high priority near-term actions related to funding outdoor recreation in the first chapter. In addition to changes in marketing the Discover Pass, the Task Force recommends:

- Promoting expanded use of Metropolitan Parks Districts (RCW Chapter 35.61) to provide an additional funding source for local, regional and state park systems.
- Enhancing concession and lease revenues (\$300,000 to \$400,000 annually by 2020).
- Expanding recognition of donor and sponsorship programs for operation and maintenance at State Parks to other state lands consistent with ESB 6034 (Chapter 86, Laws 2014).

OLYMPIC DISCOVERY TRAIL

The Olympic Discovery Trail, planned to be the westward end of the cross-state trail system, will span nearly 130 miles from Port Townsend to Forks, connecting four cities and over 20 parks. About 60 miles, mostly paved, are completed. The trail's planning and construction involved cooperation of multiple public and private partners. Clallam County recognizes the importance of the trail, not only providing recreational opportunities, but as an important part of the county's transportation infrastructure. The trail is managed in the county Public Works Department and is part of the county's required six-year Transportation Improvement Plan.

METROPOLITAN PARKS DISTRICTS

Metropolitan Park Districts (MPD) offer more fiscal capacity and flexibility in terms of property tax levy and debt limit than parks and recreation districts (RCW 36.69) or Park and Recreation Service Areas (RCW 36.68.400). There are currently 17 MPDs in the State. The most recent MPDs created are the Seattle MPD (2014), Chuckanut Community Forest and Recreation District (2013), Tukwila Pool Metro Park District (2011) and Shelton Metro Park District, William Shore Memorial Pool Park District (Clallam County), and Village Green Metro Park District (Kitsap County) in 2010.

A number of new revenue sources for state recreation lands were discussed. The Task Force's funding subcommittee provided three approaches (see the full report of the Meet Future Recreation Needs subcommittee in Appendix VII). The proposed sources and anticipated revenues are summarized in Table 2. The Task Force did not make a specific recommendation.

Table 2: Possible Revenue Sources for State Outdoor Recreation Programs

Anticipated Revenues (\$)						
<i>Revenue Source</i>	<i>FY 2016</i>	<i>FY 2017</i>	<i>2015 - 17</i>	<i>2017 - 19</i>	<i>2019 - 21</i>	<i>Notes</i>
\$5 car registration fee	29,879,500	30,530,000	60,409,500	62,916,500	64,584,000	Based upon WSDOT June 2014 Revenue Forecast www.ofm.wa.gov/budget/info/June14transpovol2.pdf
Apply vehicle fee and Discover Pass option to new vehicles	217,854	217,854	435,708	435,708	435,708	Assumes 350K new vehicles sales + 350K out of state vehicle registration with 2.73% purchase annual Discover Pass with 38% through DOL
Modify Discover Pass to include transaction fee	2,018,750	2,018,750	4,037,500	4,250,000	4,356,250	Assumes 70% of annual passes sold by State Parks. Imposes \$5 transaction fee on annual passes and \$1 fee on daily pass by \$1. Assumes 5% reduction in sales for first biennium and 5% increase in 2019-21.
Adjust Discover Pass for inflation	1,543,750	1,543,750	3,087,500	3,250,000	3,412,500	Increases annual DP by \$2.5 and daily pass by \$1. Assumes 5% reduction in sales for first biennium and 5% increase in 2019-21.
0.5 % Annual Motor Home / Travel Trailer Excise Tax	8,932,000	10,378,000	19,310,000	22,505,000	24,435,000	63,000 motor homes, average payment is \$96.76, 114,000 travel trailers at \$37.56.
Extend Current Litter Tax Diversion	5,000,000	5,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	
Divert Watercraft Excise Tax	17,424,000	17,424,000	34,848,000	34,848,000	36,590,400	
Reimpose sales tax on bottled water	22,300,000	24,200,000	46,500,000	46,500,000	46,500,000	
Retain a portion of NOVA, snowmobile and boat gas tax (assumes 5¢ gas increase)	2,856,000	2,846,000	5,712,000	5,692,000	5,673,000	Assumes it is distributed through existing mechanisms for existing uses.

Recommendations for Federal Lands

The Task Force recognized the limited ability of Washington State to affect federal land management policy. However, the Task Force identified a number of issues concerning federal recreation permits, road closures, and in general the lack of coordination between state and federal agencies providing outdoor recreation opportunities. The Task Force recommends that the Governor's Office or the proposed state outdoor recreation office work with federal agencies and Washington's congressional delegation to address the issues below.

Single multi-entity access pass

The Task Force urges Congress to reauthorize legislation that allows federal land managing agencies to enter into agreements with governmental and nongovernmental entities to provide a single multi-entity pass to recreate on state and federal lands in Washington. The Governor's Office or the proposed state outdoor recreation office could take the lead in developing multi-agency agreements.

Forest road closures

Federal land managers are limiting access to public lands, for example through road closures, due to budget cuts and in order to protect the environment. These closures affect recreation access and especially impact the local "gateway" communities adjacent to the closed recreation lands. The Task Force recommends that this issue be addressed by the proposed state outdoor recreation office.

Permitting

Nonprofit organizations provide opportunities for new participants to engage in outdoor activities. Nonprofits seeking access to US Forest Service land are now being treated as commercial users, a category which requires a Special Use Permit. But it is virtually impossible to obtain these permits, since they have not been issued in the last 25 years. In addition, nonprofit event organizers find getting the necessary permits daunting. These problems disproportionately affect low-income, minority, and disadvantaged youth populations, since they are most likely to access outdoor recreation through nonprofit programs. Commercial guiding and outfitting services, important for attracting recreationists from out-of-state, also find obtaining permits problematic. The Task Force recommends the outdoor recreation office work with the Forest Service to:

- Revise permit rules to exempt 501(c)(3) groups from commercial use permit requirements. This would align with legislation being introduced at the federal level in the coming months. Non-profit groups would still be subject to local group size limits where applicable.
- Establish an entity that offers a streamlined permitting service for outdoor recreation events. This would give event organizers "one-stop shopping" to ascertain what permits are necessary and then receive expedited processing of the permits.
- Streamline commercial recreation permitting process.

Appendix I | Executive Order 14-01

Appendix II | Task Force Bios

Appendix III | Task Force Charter

Appendix IV | Task Force Meeting Summaries

Appendix V | Background Information

Appendix VI | Public Outreach

Appendix VII | Links to Task Force Subcommittee Reports and Other Resources

Appendix VIII | Ends Notes