

Blue Ribbon Parks and Outdoor Recreation Task Force
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May 5, 2014 Meeting Summary

The second of six Task Force meetings was held on May 5 at REI Corporate Headquarters in Kent. The objectives were to gather public comment; launch the four Task Force subcommittees; and review public outreach and engagement process and tools. The meeting was well attended: Fourteen of the 17 voting members participated (George Harris, Tom Reeve and Doug Walker were unable to attend), along with 11 of 12 non-voting members (Senator Ranker was unable to attend) and at least 45 members of the public.

Twenty-one people provided comment, many of whom submitted additional material for Task Force member review. Three themes emerged from the public comment: (1) the importance of amplifying and fostering the connection between outdoor recreation, the environment, and improved human health; (2) the need for sustained funding to support employment, infrastructure, operations and maintenance, and access to outdoor recreation facilities statewide; and (3) leveraging underutilized economic development opportunities in the state's outdoor recreation sector. There are missed opportunities related to tourism, marketing and improved infrastructure; examples include the recreational fishing and boating sectors. Visit the [Task Force Web page](#) for meeting materials and upcoming meeting dates.

Key Outcomes

- **Task Force subcommittee structure and assignments confirmed.** Next steps related to topics and outreach identified by each group. Subcommittees asked for more direction and deadlines regarding process. Co-chairs and staff will outline the process and forward to subcommittee leads. View the [Subcommittee members and themes](#) online.
- **21 people provided public comment.**
- **Online engagement tool, www.engageoutdoorwashington.com, launched.** Task Force members requested refinements to improve the Web site's functionality and impact. Stakeholders and members of the public encouraged to participate in the online dialogue. Interested parties are also welcome to submit comments via email to meg.oleary@rco.wa.gov.

Opening Remarks

Marc Berejka, Task Force member and REI Director of Government and Community Affairs opened the meeting, and Catherine Walker, REI Senior Vice President and General Counsel welcomed attendees to the REI corporate headquarters. City of Kent Mayor Suzette Cooke's opening remarks served as a reminder of the cultural diversity in Washington state, how that diversity shapes how we recreate, and thus the infrastructure needed to support it—particularly

in highly diverse communities like Kent. She asked us to consider the importance of retrofitting our cities and communities for increased recreating.

Updates & Subcommittee Structure

Co-chair Barb Chamberlain led a brief round of introductions of members not present at the first meeting. Next, she introduced Task Force subcommittee leads, reviewed subcommittee expectations, and asked how members were involving others in subcommittee work. RCO staff offered to help set up conference calls for subcommittee meetings and reminded the group about [existing reports available](#) on the Task Force Web site that could help advance subcommittee work.

Public Comment

Comments are summarized and listed in the order presented at the meeting.

1. **Carrie Hite, Washington Recreation & Park Association:** Protect recreation funding. Leverage tourism/marketing to promote recreation. Reward preventative efforts on health care/obesity prevention (make investments up front). Make outdoor recreation and programs eligible use for gang prevention. Youth Athletic Facilities need to be funded in 2015-2017. Capital shows immediate results, and protecting these investments, including operations and maintenance, is crucial. Remove lid on dedicated accounts that diverts money to Motor Vehicle Fund. Minimize/eliminate liability risk that hinders parks/schools field-sharing partnerships. Reauthorize use of Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) for operations and maintenance.
2. **Dale Scott, Coastal Conservation Association:** Encourage and support sportfishing and leverage economic development opportunities. At one time, Washington state was known as the salmon fishing capital of the world; now anglers often travel out of state for salmon and steelhead fishing. Explore implications of Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife's growing reliance on license fee revenue. Increase number of fishing licenses sold rather than increasing fees.
3. **Bill Becker, Washington Environmental Council:** Importance of connection between the environment, outdoor recreation and economic development in Washington state.
4. **Sam Baraso, Willamette Partnership:** Link between public health, outdoor recreation and nature is an important component of economic development, especially rural. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has noted that your zip code determines more of your health than you genetic code.
5. **Martha Comfort, Northwest Marine Trade Association:** Importance of supporting the boating and marine industry in Washington state.
6. **Bob Ranzenbach, Recreation Boating Association of Washington:** Importance of fostering the boating and marine industry in Washington state. Recreational boating sector wants fair return on the taxes they contribute to the state economy. Boats are the only vessels in the state that pay a percentage-based excise tax to the state general fund.

Seattle Boat Show brings hundreds of thousands of visitors to the state, yet Washington offers no promotional nor marketing assistance. Consider benefits of Vancouver, British Columbia's tax-free option for extended stay boaters.

7. **Dwight Jones, Northwest Marine Trade Association:** Importance of fostering the boating and marine industry in Washington state.
8. **John Cochran, Cochran Consulting:** Connection between health, environment and outdoor recreation. Engaging individuals in healthy outdoor activities needs to start where people live and work, and for many, that means in cities or urban areas.
9. **Rob Smith, National Parks Conservation Association:** Encourage the state to fully engage in studies led by the National Park Service to consider restoration of the grizzly bear to remote areas of the North Cascades. Support designation of new National Park Service areas. Support establishment of Manhattan Project National Historical Park at Hanford. Approve Mountains to Sound National Heritage Area.
10. **Glenn Glover, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance:** Cost efficiency.
11. **Sarah Krueger, University of Washington School of Environmental & Forest Services:** Connection between outdoor recreation and public health.
12. **Amy Brockhaus, Mountains to Sound Greenway:** Benefits of outdoor recreation and need for sustained funding.
13. **Benjamin Greuel, The Wilderness Society:** Importance of the connection between conservation and recreation.
14. **Karen Daubert, Washington Trails Association:** Outdoor recreation and trail statistics in Washington state; need for forwarding thinking and trails funding; consider a single park pass that provides access throughout the state.
15. **Carol Shaw, Washington State Parks Foundation:** Advocacy for greater state funding to ensure sustainability of state parks system.
16. **Randall Olson, Cairncross & Hempelmann Attorneys at Law:** How urban recreation, transit oriented design and smart growth can support and foster outdoor recreation.
17. **Don Price, Bridle Trails Park Foundation:** Using the Bridle Trails Park Foundation experience as a model for the Task Force (e.g., sustained funding for outdoor recreation).
18. **Martin LeBlanc, IslandWood:** Importance of promoting and supporting youth and outdoor recreation. In particular, support for No Child Left Inside Act, which hasn't received funding for several years.
19. **Jim Richards, Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition:** Increase state funding for outdoor recreation.
20. **Tom Bugert, Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition:** Increase state funding for outdoor recreation.

21. **Dayle Wallien, National Forest Foundation:** Recreation on national forest land and the National Forest Foundation mission to engage the public in enjoyment and maintaining the health of our national forests.

Engage Outdoor Washington Web Site Demo

The Recreation and Conservation Office launched www.engageoutdoorwashington.com on [May 1, 2014](#). This online engagement tool is intended to encourage statewide dialogue and provide focused comments and ideas related to specific questions posed by the Task Force. During the next four months, The Task Force will prompt viewers with questions falling under several key focus areas as part of an online forum. Anyone is welcome to track the dialogue; if they want to submit ideas and comments, they must register. Activity on the site has been increasing steadily. As of Monday morning, May 5, the site logged 1,005 unique site visits, 147 ideas, and 194 comments.

Members expressed concern about the way the first question was posed on the new Web site, and asked the staff to consider adding a disclaimer that reminds viewers that questions and topics posted may not necessary represent the opinions of all Task Force members. Members also considered the best way to post and sort questions so that the public can easily navigate to the topics of most interest (e.g., tagging key words). Members agreed that each subcommittee will develop Web site questions, and staff will help time the release of those questions to leverage and amplify subcommittee outreach.

Subcommittee Discussions

The four subcommittees met to discuss topics they plan to focus on; how they will approach stakeholder outreach and encourage public comment; and how best to structure subcommittee member dialogue and communication. Visit the [Task Force Web site](#) for a list of subcommittee members and themes. Highlights from the breakout group discussions follow:

Economic Development

Themes include: supporting outdoor recreation industry; rural and gateway communities; urban communities; and marketing and tourism. This subcommittee will explore ways to promote Washington in general and rural gateway communities in particular. They will schedule weekly conference calls.

Get More People Outdoors

Themes include: getting kids outdoors; increasing participation of underserved populations; outdoor education; and the recreation and health connection. This subcommittee will explore ways to get kids and underserved communities outdoors, get parents outdoors in order to support and encourage their kids' outdoor recreation; permit and fee reform; access; and building awareness (i.e., marketing) of what outdoor recreation opportunities exist.

Meet Future Recreation Needs

Themes include: funding, including capital and private; meeting the needs of underserved populations; providing opportunities for a changing demographic; adapting to new trends in

outdoor recreation; and work with private landowners to expand opportunities. This subcommittee will explore outreach tools and approaches, for example, surveys.

State Role in Providing Outdoor Recreation

Themes include: state agencies focused on outdoor recreation (e.g., state parks, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish & Wildlife, Department of Transportation); state role in local parks and communities; state role in recreation provided by non-profit or private entities; and state role/relationship on federal recreation issues. This subcommittee will encourage stakeholders to become active with www.engageoutdoorwashington.com, submit comments, and attend Task Force meetings.

Next Steps & Action

Task Force Co-Chairs

- Work with staff and facilitator to develop more specific guidance on subcommittee roles and deadlines.
- Work with the four subcommittee leads to develop topic related questions to post on the www.engageoutdoorwashington.com. Staff will help ensure the timing of these questions support and leverage each subcommittee's research and outreach.

RCO & Consultant Partners

- Revise www.engageoutdoorwashington.com Web site to improve ease of navigation, comment tracking and functionality.

RCO Staff

- Confirm Task Force meeting dates and locations through September 2014
- Post meeting summary
- Ongoing subcommittee support