

Blue Ribbon Parks and Outdoor Recreation Task Force  
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## June 10, 2014 Meeting Summary

The third of six Task Force meetings was held June 10 at the Washington State University Riverpoint campus in Spokane. The objectives were to share progress made by the four Task Force subcommittees and gather public comment. The meeting was well attended: Thirteen of 17 voting members participated (Joshua Brandon, Connor Inslee, Dan Nordstrom and Tom Reeve were unable to attend), along with 8 of 12 non-voting members (Allyson Brooks, Rep. Buys, Jim Cahill and Sen. Ranker were unable to attend) and 27 members of the public.

Three central themes emerged from the 18 people who provided public comment: (1) the desire to revisit permit and fee structures that support outdoor recreation; (2) need for increased and improved access, in all its forms; and (3) the need for increased funding to support parks and outdoor recreation infrastructure, operations and maintenance, and staffing levels. Stakeholders pointed out missed opportunities related to youth recreation, tourism and marketing, wildlife viewing, and the state's recreational fishing and boating sector. Visit the [Task Force Web page](#) for meeting materials and upcoming meeting dates.

### Key Outcomes

- **Task Force subcommittees continue to generate a wealth of insight.** Each subcommittee have met several times and engaged their broader stakeholder groups for additional perspective. Their focus now turns to developing recommendations for the final Task Force report due to Governor Inslee in September. View the [Subcommittee members and themes](#) online.
- **Eighteen people provided public comment and added to our collective dialogue.**
- **[www.engageoutdoorwashington.com](http://www.engageoutdoorwashington.com) continues to encourage public involvement.** To date, we have received nearly 26,000 page views, 6,000 unique site visits, and 300 comments. Top three themes include access, hunting/shooting/fishing, and park infrastructure. New questions generated by the Task Force subcommittees are posted weekly through mid July. Participation is encouraged. Interested parties are also welcome to submit comments via email to [meg.oleary@rco.wa.gov](mailto:meg.oleary@rco.wa.gov).

### Opening Remarks

Washington State University Spokane Chancellor, Lisa Brown, welcomed attendees to the Riverpoint campus, and Avista Regional Business Manager, Latisha Hill, highlighted Spokane's outdoor recreation opportunities, including the successful [Huntington Park redevelopment](#).

### Task Force Subcommittee Updates

#### Economic Development Subcommittee

Subcommittee members are developing recommendations related to: improving **access** to, and **affordability** of, outdoor recreation; **improving cross agency coordination**; **motivating the next generation** to play outdoors; **promoting the outdoors**; and **funding**.

### **Get More People Outdoors Subcommittee**

Subcommittee members are developing recommendations related to: **Reinstating No Child Left Inside** (proven program for matched funding); **Access** (if parks are permanently closed, or access is unpredictable due to lack of funding or maintenance, then people are less likely to recreate in those areas); **Diversity** (Permits are designed for families *not* for groups like YMCA or Boys and Girls Clubs. Consider elders and those with physical challenges. Consider military and veterans. Consider youth. Consider issues of affordability, i.e., Discover Pass); **Marketing** (Support public recreation events that get people outside. Work with schools to get kids to motivate parents. Use high schoolers to develop marketing materials.)

### **Meet Future Recreation Needs Subcommittee**

Subcommittee members are exploring these approaches to filling gaps in local and state outdoor recreation resource management: **Increase earned revenue** (e.g., differential pricing and enhanced marketing); **Capture or increase broad-based taxes** (e.g., dedicated sales tax or mandatory license tab surcharge); **User-oriented taxes** (e.g., 2% rental car fee or sales tax on outdoor recreation equipment); **Leverage donations and lotteries** (e.g., increase donation threshold or leverage lottery revenues); **Local park districts** (e.g., Metropolitan Park Districts or prevent sunset of current law allowing Real Estate Excise Tax to be used by local parks for park maintenance); and **Enhance partnerships** (e.g., enhance partnerships between state agencies and local governments).

### **State Role in Providing Outdoor Recreation Subcommittee**

Subcommittee members are focused on five ideas: ways to **improve access** to land and facilities for outdoor recreation; **issues regarding users fees; improving predictability and reliability** of recreational facilities and programs; **developing new and improved programs** to get more people outside, especially kids; and **enhancing advocacy and promotion** around benefits of outdoor recreation.

### **Task Force Round Robin**

**George Harris:** Boating facilities are under-used because of Department of Revenue policies. Consider increasing per day fish limit to encourage recreational fishing. State's role is to offer more opportunities for boaters and anglers—especially those traveling from out of state.

**Spencer Olson:** What is our broader narrative for outdoor recreation in Washington state? What is the story for the experiences we're providing? We need to establish a consistent voice. State's role is tourism and marketing.

**Shiloh Schauer:** Wenatchee is the launching pad for many outdoor recreation opportunities. Consider how business can help increase outdoor recreation, and how the Discover Pass impacts that.

**John Keates:** Youth athletics program needs funding. Maintain general funds for outdoor recreation.

**Brock Milliern:** Improve access to State Department of Natural Resources land. Historically, DNR hasn't been seen as a recreation program, yet they are. DNR's job is to improve access by uncovering barriers.

**Rep. Steve Tharinger:** My role is to listen to the challenges presented by the Task Force and see how to address the barriers in the legislature.

**Dale Denney:** As a citizen, I'm grateful to the Governor for creating this Task Force.

**Nick Demerice:** We have an opportunity with the state's outdoor industry cluster (e.g., outfitters and guides). We need to talk about quality of life as a selling point and an economic development driver in Washington. Quality of life is a key factor in attracting new talent and business to our state.

**Marc Berejka:** Government coordination related to outdoor recreation access and funding is key. We also need to get our collective narrative right; it should be highly visible. Consider how to coordinate Recreation and Conservation Office's final report to the Governor with a more engaging marketing piece.

**Becky Wallace:** State's role is to implement Task Force recommendations and incorporate in the K-12 system. Consider opportunities for student designed graphics for the final report to the Governor.

**Patty Graf-Hoke:** Help convince people that what's good for the environment is good for people. Outdoor recreation is as important as aerospace in Washington. Focus on local parks; most people recreate within one mile from home. State role is to consider how we allocate funds, for example, are there efficiencies regarding outdoor recreation services? Look to private sector for leverage and support.

**Sen. Linda Parlette:** Re-open road from Stehekin to North Cascades Park. Eastern Washington residents should have same access to the park as those on the west side of the state. Let's be realistic and maintain a consistent voice with our Task Force recommendations.

**Noah McCord:** Let's get youth involved in outdoor activities. Make sure we're including all demographics. Outdoor recreation is becoming cool again among youth and their experiences are being shared via social media. Let's include Department of Health in this conversation. Consider creating a central online source for the state's outdoor recreation opportunities. Events are #1 way to increase youth involvement.

**Doug Walker:** Let's create concrete results. Leverage the outdoor industry. Build a stronger outdoor recreation economy in Washington. Fund a state tourism office. Establish recreation based economy templates for rural communities. Department of Transportation has a key role in improving and maintaining roads and access.

**Barb Chamberlain:** Outdoor recreation is not just an amenity; it's a core part and driver of the state economy. Encourage bicycle tourism—people eat in every town!

**Kaleen Cottingham:** In the past decade, we've seen a shift from general fund support for outdoor recreation, to a user pay system. Need to communicate this shift, why it occurred, and how to address it. Many don't understand why roads are being closed in recreation areas. Look at ways to communicate with public and engage them in helping to find solutions.

**Joe Stohr:** Improve operation of state fish hatcheries. These fish are central to local economies and outdoor recreation. We're at a crossroads with selective fishing and the Endangered Species Act. Consider funding challenges for hatchery research.

**Russ Cahill:** The 'pursuit of happiness' is my favorite inalienable right. An economic study is critical to put a real value on outdoor recreation. The last one was conducted in 2000. Outdoor industry and tax related spending is a cash cow in our state. We need to feed and milk the cow.

**Rodger Schmitt:** Funding is critical. Need something more all-encompassing than the Discover Pass. Need to educate youth about the outdoor ethic; will the next generation have that ethic?

**Ben Klasky:** Outdoor education exponentially increases kids' comfort in the outdoors, and therefore increases their outdoor activity.

**Louise Stanton-Masten:** Tourism is a \$17.6 billion industry in Washington. It's fourth after food, agriculture, software and aerospace. Would like better understanding of economic impact of all the sub groups within the outdoor recreation sector. Private sector needs to coordinate with public sector to promote travel and tourism.

## Staff Updates

**Economic Study:** Contactor has been selected and research is underway. Final study due by December 31, 2014.

**Engage Web Site, [www.engageoutdoorwashington.com](http://www.engageoutdoorwashington.com):** To date, we have received nearly 26,000 page views, 6,000 unique site visits, and 300 comments. The average participant is male, 47 years old, and lives in one of three postal codes—98501, 98502 or 98512. Top three themes include access, hunting/shooting/fishing, and park infrastructure. New questions generated by the Task Force subcommittees will be posted weekly through mid July. Interested parties are also welcome to submit comments via email to [meg.oleary@rco.wa.gov](mailto:meg.oleary@rco.wa.gov). Some Task Force members recommended that all remaining questions should be posted at once to encourage more participation. Staff will revisit the schedule and increase the number of questions posted each week.

**Task Force Schedule:** Task Force draft recommendations due to Recreation and Conservation Office by July 15. Final Task Force recommendations due by August 15. Staff will create a template to facilitate = development of subcommittee recommendations.

## Public Comment

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

1. **Ken Carmichael, Riverside State Park Foundation:** Shouldn't limit fees to users only, because the general public benefits as a whole from our outdoor recreation resources. We should all contribute to the expenses; the burden of supporting parks shouldn't just be on the users.
2. **Caren Hubbard, Riverside State Park Foundation:** Outdoor recreation for all citizens.
3. **Brad McQuarrie, Mt. Spokane Ski & Snowboard Park:** Winter recreation and getting youth outside. Mt. Spokane Ski Area, a non-profit concessionaire of Washington State Parks, is the highest revenue generating concession in the state park system. We have a unique perspective and invite Task Force members to contact us for further discussion.
4. **Jaime Brush, citizen:** Distinction between driving to a recreation area and just biking locally. By simply changing your transport mode to biking, you are recreating outside. Make it safe (e.g., biking infrastructure), and make it easy (e.g., encourage walkable school planning so kids can bike/walk to school rather than be driven).
5. **Lucinda Whaley, Washington State Parks Commission:** We're in this together—local, state, federal. State parks revenue has fallen, 1/3 staff has been lost, and there is a substantial deferred parks maintenance backlog. Need general funding on operating and capital projects side.
6. **Mike Petersen, The Lands Council:** Now that our economy is improving, we need to invest in our state parks again. Mt. Spokane recreation area would be great event venue and revenue generator in the off season when the parking lot is empty.

7. **Stan Brogdon, Coastal Conservation Association:** Salmon fishing is not just a salt water activity. 40 percent of fishing licenses are purchased in eastern Washington. Recreational fishing and related manufacturing is key economic driver and revenue source. Make recreational fishing an economic priority, promote conservation through harvest management, and improve/upgrade hatchery operations.
8. **Eric Sawyer, State Park Foundation & Sports Commission:** Need solution for state park funding. Continue to establish K-12 outdoor recreation curriculum. Make sure kids are exposed to encourage a lifetime of outdoor activity.
9. **Don Hoch, Washington State Parks:** June is Great Outdoors month nationwide. Join us for the June 14 event on the Olympia capitol campus. Governor Inslee will speak at the event.
10. **Dave Waldron, Washington state outfitters & guides:** Read an excerpt from the outfitter and guides' Code of Ethics. Performance standards to ensure safety and quality of experience.
11. **Chris Guidotti, Washington State Parks:** Keep parks open and accessible to all. Discover Pass is a barrier. We talk about parks as a product or business instead of a value. Put parks on a path to sustainable legacy for all.
12. **Eric Bakken, 49° North Mountain Resort:** Focus on access, funding and motivating folks to get outside. Increase promotion of outdoor recreation in Washington.
13. **Tom Bugert, Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition:** Consider this as you prepare the final report to Governor Inslee: Outdoor recreation is an incredibly diverse sector/industry—highlight this (it's business and much more). Highlight what we already do well—its an opportunity to celebrate.
14. **Dave Spurbeck, citizen:** Importance of access and opportunity for youth and people new to outdoor recreation. Work with private land owners to continue providing public access to their land.
15. **Wanda Clifford, Inland Northwest Wildlife Council:** Price of various permits is a barrier to getting outside. Many can't afford it. Consider affordability in your recommendations.
16. **Madonna Luers, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife:** Public events are important to encourage outdoor recreation.
17. **Bart Haggin, citizen:** Get seniors outdoors. More money is spent by bird watchers than by hunters/fishers. Need to acknowledge and support bird watching and wildlife viewing opportunities.
18. **Gary Douvia, Coville Hatchery:** Create more opportunities for youth recreation and education. For example, hatchery and youth education. Our program offers credit/certificates, nature trails, opportunities for research, and a successful example of a self supporting public-private partnership.

## Next Steps & Action

### Task Force Co-Chairs

- Ongoing subcommittee support as they draft their recommendations

### RCO Staff

- Create a template to facilitate development of subcommittee recommendations.
- Revise schedule for posting questions on Engage Web site. Increase weekly number and consider ending questions by July 15 when subcommittee draft recommendations are due.
- Post public comment template on Recreation and Conservation Office Task Force Web site.
- Post meeting summary and provide ongoing subcommittee support.