

## Appendix F: Statement of Need

### Looking to the Future

When the Washington State Legislature established the WWRP in 1990, it found that "if current trends continue, some wildlife species and rare ecosystems will be lost in the state forever and public recreational lands will not be adequate to meet public demands."<sup>1</sup> These trends—a growing and changing population seeking access to outdoor recreation, continuing conversion of conservation lands to other purposes, and numerous other threats to plant and animal species and their habitat—are continuing, demonstrating that there is still need for the WWRP now and in the future.

### Need Resulting from Demographic and Social Change

According to the 2013 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 90 percent of Washington residents participate in some type of outdoor recreational activities and, on average, residents spend 56 days a year recreating outdoors.<sup>2</sup> When the Legislature created the WWRP in 1990, the Washington State population was 4.9 million. Today, in 2015, the population has grown to 7.1 million, and is projected to be 8.8 million by 2040, an 80 percent increase since the start of the program.<sup>3</sup> Keeping pace with population growth was one of the most frequent comments in the stakeholder survey.<sup>4</sup>

The demographic composition of Washington's population also is changing, with the portion of the population 65 years old and older projected to grow disproportionately faster than the population as a whole. By 2020, the percentage of the state's population 65 or older is expected to exceed the school-age population (ages 5-17). By 2040, more than one in five Washingtonians will be 65 or older.<sup>5</sup> The population of racial and ethnic minority groups has also been growing disproportionately faster than the state population as a whole. The Office of Financial Management is revising projections of the state's racial and ethnic composition, so estimates are not available. National projections forecast that by 2060, the non-Hispanic white population will be 43.6 percent of the U.S. population; Hispanic, 28.6 percent; black, 13.0 percent; and Asian, 9.1 percent.<sup>6</sup> These increases in the diversity will occur in Washington's population, and will result in the need for new and different types of recreational facilities and opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup>Washington LAWS 1990 1st Ex. Sess. C 14 § 1

<sup>2</sup>Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, *2013-2018 Washington State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*

<sup>3</sup>Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2015

<sup>4</sup>Appendix E, Survey Question 3

<sup>5</sup>ibid

<sup>6</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. *Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060*. Current Population Reports, March, 2015

In addition to these demographic changes, Washington State is undergoing significant social change that also will affect need for, and use of, outdoor recreational facilities:<sup>7</sup>

- Changes in family structure (single parents, same sex parents, smaller families)
- Population migration from suburban to urban areas
- Increased youth obesity and resulting health issues
- Decline in marriage rates; marriage at a later age
- Reduced dependency on automobiles by young people
- Emergence of new recreational activities

These social and demographic trends indicate that there will be an ongoing or increasing need for the WWRP to provide new facilities and opportunities for Washington's growing and changing population.

Most residents are satisfied with the recreation facilities they use, but demand for facilities exceeds supply and will continue to do so as the population grows. Local agencies say they only have 70-80 percent of the facilities they need, and for all providers, 25 percent of their facilities are not fully functional.<sup>8</sup> For local agencies, in the near term, 25 percent of capital facility development funding goals will not be met, for other providers about 40 percent of capital facility development needs will go unmet as well as 33 percent of land acquisition goals will go unmet.<sup>9</sup> Although some agencies have been successful in generating revenue at their facilities, these resources most often supplement declining maintenance budgets rather than developing new facilities or purchasing land. For state agencies that rely on federal grants to support facility development, funding will continue to be unpredictable, limited to only parts of the state or specific activities, and may not keep pace with inflation. For local governments, raising money for parks and open space remains constrained by constitutional (state) and statutory provisions.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Fox, J. Presentation to the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation, April 9, 2014

<sup>8</sup>Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, *2013-2018 Washington State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*

<sup>9</sup>Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, Executive summary, *2013-2018 Washington State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*, p15

<sup>10</sup>A Legislative Guide to Washington State Property Taxes, Senate Ways and Means Committee, 2014, p8-11

## Need Resulting from Continuing Pressure on Washington's Natural Landscape

Development associated with population growth reduces the supply of land available to support healthy populations of Washington's flora and fauna and the ecosystems upon which they depend. A recent study of counties in the Puget Sound region shows that for each new resident there was, on average, an associated 0.15 acres of canopy clearing and increase in impervious surface of about 1,600 square feet.<sup>11</sup> Washington now hosts 61 federally-listed endangered or threatened species and species of concern, nearly double the number in 1990. More than 80 additional animal and insect species are listed under our state's endangered, threatened, and sensitive classification.<sup>12</sup> The Washington State Department of Natural Resources' Priority Species list describes about 500 plant and animal species and 300 ecosystems as rare.<sup>13,14</sup> As more land is converted to other uses or is degraded through existing and adjacent uses, the number of species and ecosystems of conservation concern is likely to increase.

In addition to reducing the total amount of available open space and conservation land, residential and commercial development also contributes to habitat fragmentation due to conversion of habitat land and construction of roads, canals, and energy and other types of infrastructure. This, in turn, leads to disruption of seasonal migratory patterns, species dispersal (and thus loss of genetic diversity), and the ability of species to relocate to more favorable environments in response to fire, floods, drought, invasive species, and climate change. Cutting off pathways linking crucial habitats reduces the ecological value of the remaining habitat, no matter how well protected and managed.<sup>15</sup>

Working lands are important in providing habitat and habitat connectivity, especially if managed in an environmentally sustainable manner, preserving features with high ecological value. The farmland base continues to decline—the total amount of farmland in Washington has declined from 15.7 million acres in 1997 to 14.7 million acres in 2012.<sup>16</sup> Much of the loss is due to urbanization, resulting in habitat loss, increased impermeable surfaces affecting rainwater runoff and infiltration, and habitat fragmentation. The importance of working lands in meeting current needs and responding to future trends in conservation was the most frequent comment in Question 5 of the stakeholder survey.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>State of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, High Resolution Change Detection, 2015

<sup>12</sup>State of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Endangered Species Web site, 2015

<sup>13</sup>Washington State Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Plan, 2011 Update

<sup>14</sup>Washington State Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Plan, 2007 Update

<sup>15</sup>Western Governors' Association. Wildlife Corridors Initiative Report. June 2008

<sup>16</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture. *USDA Census for Agriculture 2012*

<sup>17</sup>Appendix E, Survey Question 5

These growing pressures on Washington's natural landscape indicate that there will be not only be a continuing need for WWRP, but also a need to take advantage of new scientific research, conservation plans and strategies, species recovery plans, and conservation tools.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

Stakeholders interviewed and polled for this report overwhelmingly agreed that the goals of the WWRP, as set forth by the 1990 Legislature, continue to reflect current needs and future trends in recreation and conservation.<sup>19</sup> Many of the trends listed above are expected to continue, making the WWRP as important as ever in meeting the legislatively mandated goal "to acquire as soon as possible the most significant lands for wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation purposes before they are converted to other uses, and to develop existing public recreational land and facilities to meet the needs of present and future generations."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Examples include research tools such as multispectral imaging, decision support tools such as GIS mapping of habitat fragmentation or biodiversity threats, and acquisition tools such as purchase of carbon or nutrient credits.

<sup>19</sup>Appendix E, Survey Question 3

<sup>20</sup>Washington LawS 1990 1st Ex. Sess. C 14 § 1