

APPENDIX A: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE 2013-2018 WASHINGTON STATE TRAILS PLAN

BACKGROUND

In this project, extensive use of the Internet allowed a convenient and successful way for the public, the Trails Advisory Committee, and the NOVA Advisory Group to discuss the issues affecting revisions to the trails plan without attending in-person meetings. Internet blog Web sites were created for this purpose.

A blog (short for “web log” and defined at http://codex.wordpress.org/Introduction_to_Blogging) is a discussion or informational Web site consisting of discrete entries (‘posts’) and, in the use made here, displayed so contributors can respond to seed questions posed to them and can read and comment on the comments of other contributors. The following sites were used:

Public Town Hall Discussion Web site http://watrailstownhall.wordpress.com For collecting input from the general public.
Trails Advisory Group Discussion Web site http://trailscommittee.wordpress.com For collecting input from this Advisory Group.
NOVA Advisory Group Discussion Web site http://novacommittee.wordpress.com For collecting input from this Advisory Group.

The format used here was to pose questions asking stakeholders to provide narrative answers offering their opinions about the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities on trails and the issues that ought to be included in the *2013-2018 Washington State Trails Plan*.

Before posting for public viewing a moderator reviewed all comments to ensure a civil discussion (not a problem for this project) and to ensure spurious posts (e.g., spam) did not get posted.

The Town Hall and Advisory blogs were active from mid-May to mid-August 2013. During that time, the public and advisors were asked to respond to series of questions posted at their sites with each question remaining active until the frequency of commenting decreased (usually about two weeks).

Caveats

- Do not extrapolate these comments to the state as a whole. In a blog discussion, participation comes from respondents who self-select. This means there is no effort to sample stakeholders in a scientifically valid way (i.e., random sampling). Consequently,

it would be inappropriate to ascribe quantitative meanings (e.g., percentages, majority/minority sentiments, trends) on any issue. Treat these results as valid opinions of individuals, not as a summary of results that are generally applicable across the state.

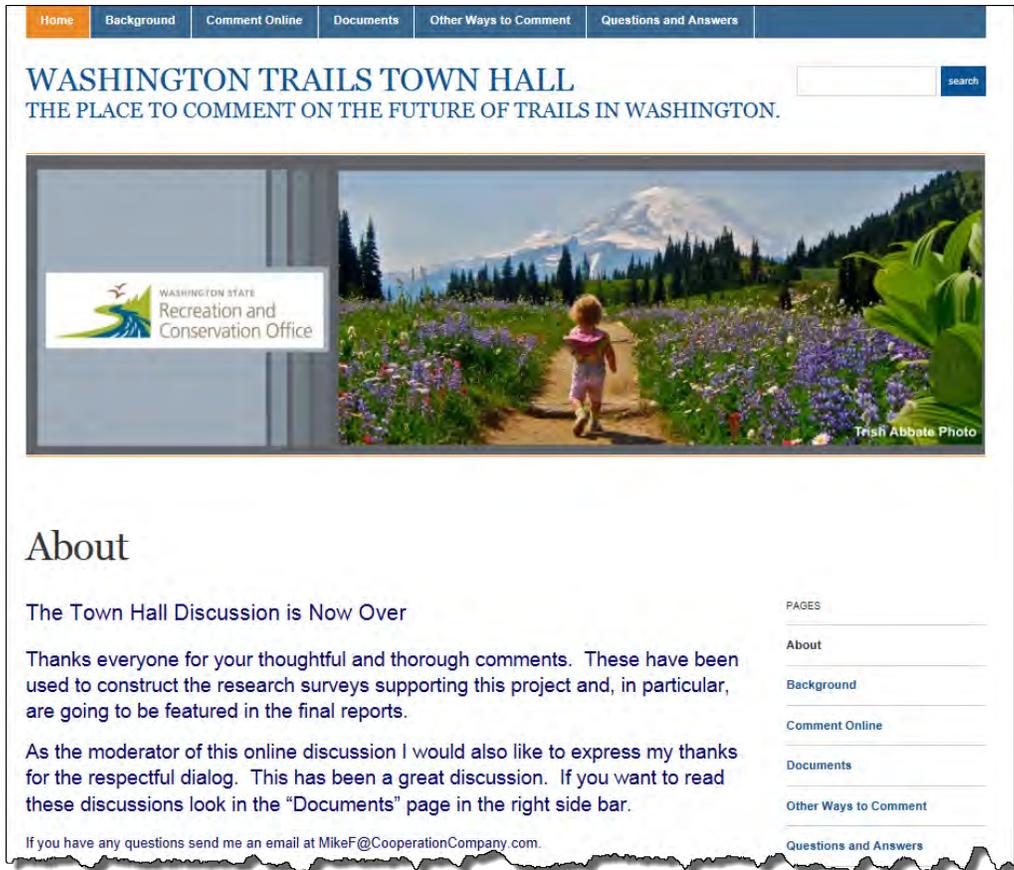
- The results are informative. Despite the qualification above, the stakeholder input is valuable much in the same way as are results from a focus group (i.e., as qualitative descriptions of the core issues that surround the questions posed to stakeholders). This form of input is useful in identifying the issues that are important to stakeholders and for gaining first-level insight about why these issues are important to them. One value of this method of collecting public input is that people can react to each other's comments and, in so doing, can prompt further thoughts and insights from one another.
- Adding the participation rates from each round will not equal the totals presented above. For the total number of participants: Because many people participated in more than one round, the total number of participants reported above does not include duplicates. For the total number of comments: A small number of people who provided e-mail comments requested that their comments not be made available for public viewing. Therefore these people are omitted from the counts below but are included in the grand total.

With these caveats in mind, the Town Hall public input and the Trails Advisory Committee input received for the 2013 revisions to the Washington Trails Plan have been compiled in the section to follow.

TOWN HALL INPUT

Introduction

A key consideration in the re-writing of the Washington Trails Plan was public input. Stakeholders were engaged in seven rounds of discussion over the Internet using a 'blog' Web site as described above (see landing page, below).



To get the word out about the Town Hall discussion forum, RCO sent news releases to media centers across the state. The RCO also e-mailed announcements to its list of interested stakeholders and organizations. In addition, a similar announcement was e-mailed to all people who had previously participated in a similar online discussion for the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. For each round of Town Hall questions, e-mails were sent to the RCO stakeholder list and all previous Trails Town Hall participants were notified of the new question. In each mailing stakeholders were asked to tell their network about the existence of the Town Hall. These online discussions promoted a dialog that was used to construct research components supporting the plan re-write and in writing the plan itself. Participation was robust with 160 people contributing 297 comments (see below),

Total number of comments (i.e., total number of e-mail addresses for all rounds + opt outs)	297
Total number of people commenting (i.e., total number of unique e-mails all rounds + opt outs)	160
Round 1 – Total Emails = # of comments =	101
Unique Emails = # people =	77
Round 2 – Total Emails = # of comments =	44
Unique Emails = # people =	44
Round 3 – Total Emails = # of comments =	43

Unique Emails = # people =	42
Round 4 – Total Emails = # of comments =	37
Unique Emails = # people =	34
Round 5 – Total Emails = # of comments =	32
Unique Emails = # people =	30
Round 6 – Total Emails = # of comments =	14
Unique Emails = # people =	14
Round 7 – Total Emails = # of comments =	27
Unique Emails = # people =	26

ROUND 1 FINDINGS

Round 1 Question

What are the most important priorities for improving trails recreation over the next five years?

Summary Observations by the Blog Facilitator

In this round of discussion, 77 people commented, providing 101 comments. Below is a summary of the themes of the comments, followed by a *verbatim* reporting of all comments.

Cooperation vs. Competition

An equestrian noted the risks of in-fighting among backcountry users, “We'd like to see users working together rather than against each other. United we are a small but firm voice for back country recreation funding. Not united we are just making noise for our own pleasure or displeasure.”

One ORV user wants more opportunity for his recreation but also recognized the importance of a coalition of support around trails, “If we work together as volunteers, as good stewards of the land then I believe that we can make a goal of more open and maintained land / trails / recreation areas for everyone in the state.”

And one Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Program Advisory Group member forcefully made his case, “While we all have our own iron in the fire it is apparent that we are arguing over very little. For those that don't know the NOVA account contributions from gas taxes has been significantly diminished by the legislature. The loss of this funding is a crippling blow to the overall funding of all user interests... The entire recreational community needs to advocate for the re-establishment of the accounts, the plate will then hold enough to provide support to all groups. It needs to be impressed on the legislature that dollars committed to NOVA and RTP [Recreational Trails Program] are in many cases double dollars. All of these grants require and receive volunteer labor hours. All of the user groups participate in volunteer support to facilitate these grants... We can all continue to argue over who should get what, however these arguments are better aired in the NOVA grant committee, composed of all user

groups. I am not sure what the process is in the RTP program but having served on the NOVA committee for several years I can attest to fairness of the process... So let's concentrate on the account and then determine how to invest it."

Trail Maintenance

Motorized recreationists pointed out that their lack of access to certain trails means there is no incentive for volunteers to do routine maintenance that helps managers. The thought process was that since their access would depend on trail clearing, grooming, etc., the motorized recreation community would have an incentive to get involved: "Why not let off-road mc clubs have access and they will be cleared in short order." A King County employee stressed the need for maintenance and the value of agency-public partnerships using volunteers for maintenance. There was a strong call for using volunteers, especially in this tight fiscal climate; as one commenter put it, "provide every possible support to volunteer groups who do such terrific work, e.g. Washington Trails Association."

Trail Connectivity

One respondent commented, "To improve the trail system itself, loops and trails that connect with communities or other trails are always helpful." One solution could be, "multi-jurisdictional coordination on trails, since many planned or proposed trails cross multiple ownerships". Some users need a minimum length of trails to make an outing worthwhile; as a horsewoman put it, "For horseback riders, a trail system needs a minimum of 12-15 miles." A motorcycle rider expressed frustration because "many locations make it hard to connect from trail to trail with one trail ending just a mile or two down the road (gravel) from where the next begins. There should be an allowance for riding gravel roads with ORV tags in specific areas." A bicyclist made the point that the term 'trail' should be broadened. Her story was one of abandoning a one-year bicycle road trip for personal safety concerns, "Paved road designated as bicycle routes were truly very dangerous. It would be nice to have a multipurpose network interconnected statewide roads with developed areas accessible for all off-road modalities."

Building New Trails and New Opportunities

At least part of the pressure on current trails could be alleviated by simply changing the designation of what a trail is that is suitable for access to the public. One Town Hall contributor made this case, and then acknowledged the need to manage liability, "Trails are nice. But if funding is scarce, please do not lock people out of areas, just because there is not a world-class walking path. Certainly warnings should be placed advising of the primitive nature (or lack of) a trail. Perhaps advice about 'own risk', and 'own responsibility for rescue' would be appropriate." One user wants more Eastern Washington opportunity for ATVs, "I would like to propose an RV Park setting for four wheel drives rock crawlers ATVs and motorcycles. I believe having such a designated area would relieve pressure off of other areas that are not so desirable and give the four wheelers a place to go. I have seen this done on the Westside but nothing on the east side of the North cascades."

Crowding

There is a concern that crowding of existing facilities for motorized recreationists creates management problems. A dirt biker observed, "By closing other ORV parks they [managers] forced a large number of people to one area. Now over-crowded and unmaintained trails have led to deteriorated trails that once were very fun and safe to some [that are] often unrideable and extremely dangerous."

Location and Accessibility

Access to information about opportunities was mentioned along with a request to create a Web site with links to trails by type of allowed activity.

Road Access and Road Maintenance

Recreation opportunities are being truncated because of road closures that prevent access to trailheads: "No road means no access, no trail crews, no volunteers, and essentially no trail." Recognized causes for closures included reduced government budgets, gated private roads, and extensive and expensive processes to complete road repairs to modern standards. There is concern that too many logging roads on public lands are closed.

Recruitment of the Next Generation

Contributors noted an interesting shift from previous concerns that the backcountry (therefore trail) use was becoming overcrowded to a new concern that children are not receiving enough exposure to the backcountry thereby breaking connections to the out-of-doors that create a sense of stewardship in young people.

Funding

Many Town Hall contributors called for adequate funding for both maintenance and trails development.

Motorized Trails

"More motorized trails are probably needed, but not necessarily in the 'backcountry'."

Specific Problem Sites Mentioned (paraphrased quotes from the Town Hall contributors):

- Wild Sky Wilderness Area - inability to fund plans that were made.
- Mt. Loop Hwy - inaccessible because of washouts.
- Cougar Mountain - only a small portion of trails can be ridden on horseback.
- Robe Canyon – people are going beyond the sign that warns the trail is hazardous (the trail needs to be made safer).
- Barclay Lake – a heavily used trail appears to be a garbage problem.
- On Forest Service land, the Dry Creek (western Washington) trail has no bridge over Dry Creek, which is not ever dry!

Multiple-use Versus Limited-Use

There are a wide range of opinions regarding the choice between limiting types of use to 'compatible' activities versus a much wider definition of multiple-use. Perceptions about the compatibility of activities vary widely:

- "I strongly believe in nonmotorized multi-use trails. I've been all over the west and have seen it work splendidly in many locations. HIKE, BIKE and HORSE. The 3 actually get along quite well..."
- "As a multi outdoor recreation user, I believe the state needs to do what it can to make sure everyone who benefits from outdoor recreation, as I do, gets a win out of the process, and not a loss. Win/win not win/lose, or lose/lose. Create a win/win for all recreationalists. Do not close trails or opportunities for us, create more opportunities..."
- "Carefully consider the downsides of 'multi-use' trails... People love their kind of trail use, whatever it is: just think how different it is to zoom along on a motorized vehicle, ride on a horse, or walk. These things do not "just fit together"; one person's fun can all too easily be another person's fun wrecked. We should all have our preferences honored as much as possible."

But, along with this controversy there were clear calls for cooperation. A mountain biker put it this way, "Any time large groups of people share anything, conflicts will occur. My experience however is that the vast majority of users, be they mountain bikers, hikers, or horse riders, go out of their way to be courteous and friendly. Let's not let the few cantankerous obnoxious people that are out there hijack the dialogue and encourage the false perception of the amount of discord that exists between the user groups which actually is exceedingly minimal."

There were also calls for recreationists to recognize the reality of limits that exist. One contributor made the case for user responsibility coupled with respect for each other's rights and the realities of current management capacity: "As a responsible off-road vehicle owner it is upon each party to respect each other's groups access to public lands and coexist in an environment that is not only constrained by the land we have available but also the local and federal budgets allocated to upkeep these public lands."

Misdirection of 'Dedicated' Funds

Historic Nonhighway Road and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Program funds is a hot-button issue for some Town Hall contributors: "An appalling amount of resources has been raided from funds like NOVA and used for projects and state entities for which they were never intended." One solution offered is to create, "...a legal advisory committee [to] be assigned to review all legislative documents around OHV funding resources, and provide an action plan to create and maintain legislative documentation for funding and use of trails for OHV use."

Accumulating fees and taxes in general are a concern especially when coupled with a perception that these monies are not being spent to support the activities that generated the fee/tax base in the first place: "The other condition forced upon us are this Discover Pass. It

forces us to pay to use an area I already paid for when I purchase my ORV tabs every year for a increasing amount of money.”

Transparency of funding sources and subsequent allocations was mentioned as a need: “What I believe would help most is a lot more transparency in the funding, collecting, and allocation of all the monies gathered for ‘ORV funds.’”

Fees in General

Similar to the concerns expressed in the public input for the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan some users are not happy with fees (a kind-of ‘we-already-pay-taxes-for-this-recreation’ argument). Other users accept fees as appropriate. Some users are frustrated about the multiple fee structures that exist, especially when they feel unable to predict which kind of fee is needed for various recreation sites. For example, one contributor put it this way, “I have a federal public lands pass, but some Forest Service areas don't honor it - I have to pay separately for those areas and there's no way to know ahead of time which ones have been privatized.”

Verbatim Comments from the Town Hall Web site in Response to Round 1

Tami
merritr@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/24 at 4:31 pm

What are the most important priorities for improving backcountry trail recreation over the next five years?

Let's focus on the question asked. The priority is to keep the backcountry trail recreation available, and not closed due to lack of funding! Hundreds of people spend hours and hours of their personal time advocating, volunteering, sometimes back breaking work, to keep backcountry trails open. Volunteers from every user group clean, repair, create, and maintain trails all over our state in support of trail recreation. Allowing user groups to repair and maintain trails is our way to help pay for keeping these trails open to everyone. We, every user group, are losing more and more trails to "lack of funding". We need to fight hard to keep the funds available. Parking and access at trailheads are very important to keep open and maintain, as well as allowing re-routing of trails that are damaged.

Communication between user groups can be civil if we work together. Let's fight to keep funding as a group, and then work as a group to determine its best use.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sondra J
sgjohn1234@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/05/23 at 5:19 pm

Lots of horse-riding folks use and maintain trails in the back country, using pack horses to bring in tools volunteer groups for heavy work, misery-whip saws to cut out logs in the wilderness, etc. Haven't seen many backpackers packing in grub hoes, planks for bridges over muddy areas, trail cutting tools, etc. Seen various young folk groups doing great work on PCT and branching trails. Funding isn't getting any better. The Discovery pass money was to be 80% for trail work when enacted. Where'd that 80% go?

Sheila
mrs.budb@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/05/22 at 2:52 pm

Need money for maintenance. Even with all the user groups volunteering (a wonderful thing) money is needed to keep trails open and usable for all groups.

Jerry
hardinester@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/22 at 2:16 pm

The most important priority for the next five years is to identify a funding source that is adequate, steady, and based on ability to pay. I do not support additional "pay to play" schemes. This is contrary to the goal of getting more people, especially families and children, into nature.

Jule
juleschultz@yahoo.com
192.230.13.41
Submitted on 2013/05/22 at 11:45 am

It has been shown time and time again that user groups can create quality trails via volunteer driven groups. Although funding would very much help the process along, the lack of new trails does not come from lack of funding, but rather lack of an area where volunteer driven organizations can build trails. I'd like to see the process for building trails on public land in Washington streamlined by shortening the timeline and reducing red tape.

BOB BROOKE
saddlesorebob@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/05/21 at 9:56 pm

While we all have our own iron in the fire it is apparent that we are arguing over very little. For those that don't know the NOVA account contributions from gas taxes has been significantly diminished by the legislature. The loss of this funding is a crippling blow to the overall funding of all user interests.

The entire recreational community needs to advocate for the re-establishment of the accounts, the plate will then hold enough to provide support to all groups. It needs to be impressed on the legislature that dollars committed to NOVA and RTP are in many cases double dollars. All of these grants require and receive volunteer labor hours. All of the user groups participate in volunteer support to facilitate these grants.

We can all continue to argue over who should get what, however these arguments are better aired in the NOVA grant committee, composed of all user groups. I am not sure what the process is in the RTP program but having served on the NOVA committee for several years I can attest to fairness of the process.

So let's concentrate on the account and then determine how to invest it.

Joe Hawkins
vaq34webmaster@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/21 at 2:25 pm

Each county in Washington State needs to have an ORV park (much like Walker Valley). Everyone on the west side of the state needs to realize that not every piece of ground is wilderness. The state legislature needs to enact laws that will allow private land owners to open their lands up for all recreational uses, laws that protect the land owners and the state from frivolous lawsuits.

I find it funny that when the DNR gave the local press the dog and pony show at Reiter Pit showing the new jeep trails that people actually thought the best solution to the problem was to have the ORV'ers use gravel pits. Reiter Pit is an active dump site and a source of gravel, in another words part of it is still an active gravel pit.

The bottom line is that Washington is growing and our outdoor recreation opportunities are not keeping up with that growth, they are decreasing.

Everyone needs to come together and work towards a goal that will ensure that no more land is locked up by land managers, be they county, state or federal agencies.

For every acre that was put aside for the Wild Sky wilderness and for every other type of this of land closure there needs to be an equal amount of land set aside for the "rest" of the public to use, from hiking to ORVs and everything in between.

If we work together as volunteers, as good stewards of the land then I believe that we can make a goal of more open and maintained land / trails / recreation areas for everyone in the state.

Jule
juleschultz@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/21 at 2:17 pm

I have heard that in Washington many public lands agencies are reluctant to let new trails go in because of liability and the fear of being sued. This is because Washington law lets trail users sue the State if hurt on public lands because of improperly built or extreme trails. Many more trails may be allowed to be built on public lands if we could reduce/eliminate the liability of the State. Oregon, I believe, has figured this out (e.g. Hood River trails).

Judd bergeson
judd42685@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/21 at 9:04 am

There needs to be more areas for the 4x4 users.

Tom
tombaker070@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/20 at 10:11 am

1. Provide a Web site with links to trails by type of activity allowed
2. Trails are important, but so is maintenance. Provide resources to allow groups to adopt trails, and for finding grants

Trail Rider
onebluedog2@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/20 at 7:56 am

I am a hiker and an equestrian. I agree that we need more multiuse trails, particularly for the ORV users. There is a serious lack of facilities dedicated for ORV use on the west side of the Cascades. There must be some public lands appropriate for this use even if it is just seasonal. I am sure there are groups that will help regulate and maintain the sites. I understand this can be a problem but the ORV park at Sand Lake in Oregon is managed successfully by the US Forest Service. Sharing the trails with motorized vehicles is fine with me as I can hear them coming and get out of the way. Mountain bikes are only a concern on narrow trails with limited sight lines.

Dan
dancolby41@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/19 at 9:45 pm

Off-road vehicles are at the bottom of the priority list in Washington. Off-road vehicles should be able to go use the forest service roads/clear cuts/logging roads which give us a lot more area to use.

Jeff Chapman
bbbranch@olympus.net
Submitted on 2013/05/19 at 12:03 am

The NOVA formula is based on off-highway gas tax spent by all forms of recreation, not just off-road recreational vehicles. So the tax on gas used in pickups pulling trailers and cars driving to trailheads is included, and many of these users are nonmotorized trail users. The fact is hikers, mountain bikers, campers, paddlers, equestrians, and others do actually pay the gas tax that goes into the NOVA account. If NOVA was to be based solely on ATV/bike gas taxes, it would be a much smaller pot of money. The net effect would be the same (actually less) money for motorized recreation. By combining up the off-highway gas tax coming from various user types, we are able to advocate united together to save the NOVA account and stop it from being swept into other uses than supporting the agencies maintaining our backcountry trails systems.

As to ORV tabs, these funds do go to motorized recreation as they are tracked in a separate grant category within the RCO distribution. We agree that these funds should be used for motorized recreation and not swept, and the back country recreation community has been united about this as well.

I believe I speak for all back country groups when we say we believe the NOVA gas tax share should be based on 1% of the full gas tax. At one time it was, but the last two gas tax increases did not include a corresponding NOVA increase. If the legislature passes a new gas tax increase, NOVA should receive its proper share. With back country recreation becoming more and more dependant on grants, NOVA has become a key source of funding for the agencies. The lid should be lifted to its proper level. We Back Country Horsemen listed some 300 multi-user trail and campground maintenance projects that could be completed if the grant funding was available.

With discussions underway in the USFS about downsizing road, trail, and campground inventories due to inadequate revenue, our main desire for the next five years is to avoid this happening through figuring out new funding strategies while protecting existing ones. The USFS should follow the state lead in placing value on recreation and working with the user community on planning and maintenance so that our net recreational assets actually increase, not decrease. This means that these funds for primitive recreation (NOVA, RRA, snowmobile) can not be swept into other uses. RTP needs to be reauthorized as a dedicated fund federally, and the Governor should not opt-out in order to utilize RTP elsewhere. Areas that are losing access, such as Wenas, need a solution to restore public use while working positively and respectfully with private landowners. We would like to see camping restored at Burke Lake, year around trail use for equestrians in Capitol Forest, reopening of Burnt Hill, more loop options most everywhere, and transparency in the USFS and NPS Trails Classification Systems. We'd like to see RMAP projects that fix habitat for fish use modern culverts and bridges rather than road destruction for stream crossings. We'd like to see a net increase in trail inventory and an assortment of options so that all groups can find a quality and safe experience. We'd like to see movement toward completion of our cross-state trail systems such as the John Wayne, Columbia Plateau, Willapa Hills, and Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail.

And we'd like to see users working together rather than against each other. United we are a small but firm voice for back country recreation funding. Not united we are just making noise for our own pleasure or displeasure.

Dwain
tfd171@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/18 at 8:12 am

I would like to propose an RV Park setting for four wheel drives rock crawlers ATVs and motorcycles. I believe having such a designated area would relieve pressure off of other areas that are not so desirable and give the four wheelers a place to go. I have seen this done on the Westside but nothing on the east side of the North cascades. The Methow Valley is in dire need of such a place... please look very hard at making this happen I also believe it would be a good economical boost for our dying Valley.

A suggestion place would be the power line section going to the top of Highway 20 on the loop area.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to express our feelings and desires.

Thanks again for your time.

Dwain Hutson owner of NAPA Auto Parts and long time fire chief for the town of Twisp, Wa.

girl
r-m-j@wildmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/18 at 7:59 am

Here's an example of how hiker trail access has changed over the years. Yesterday I was hiking in the Staircase area of Olympic National Park. My current hiking guide describes two spur trails that are just simply not there anymore, plus one trail that is described as destroyed by a fire in 1985 and has never been resurrected. The Staircase Rapids Bridge has finally been replaced! But it's taken 15 years. The main trail I was on was only cleared of winter damage for the first 3.7 miles, to the first trail junction. That second trail has not been cleared at all. It's mid May, folks. This is a major trail into the Olympic back country. I've noticed that the trails and roads in the Olympics that are used by folks from Seattle get way better maintenance than the rest of the area, and that's not fair. We need trails in areas that get less use too, for us locals, and for people who don't want to hike in a crowd.

On the Forest Service side, the Dry Creek trail has no bridge over Dry Creek, which is not ever dry. Also a big portion of the 'trail' is simply a decommissioned logging road, which goes straight up a steep slope – no switchbacks or nothing. The LeBar end of the Dry Creek trail was inaccessible for about 3 years when the road leading to the trailhead washed out. They have put in one new trail, Copper Creek, but its way too steep for me. By the logic of some of the arguments above, I should be able to ride a dirt bike up that trail since I'm 'disabled' and can't do it on my own.

Privatization of public lands removes trail access too, such as the selling of state park lands in recent years, and the Forest Service practice of leasing land to private concessionaires. I have a federal public lands pass, but some Forest Service areas don't honor it – I have to pay separately for those areas and there's no way to know ahead of time which ones have been privatized.

I hike a lot on private timber company logging roads – they're close to home, saves time and gas. They're open to hikers, mountain bikes, horses; you can even drive your truck on them if you pay for a gate key, but guess what? Even the private timber companies (whom no one would describe as environmental extremists) don't want ATVs/ORVs on their land. Not even on their logging roads. They are just simply inherently too damaging even when used conscientiously. I know they're fun, I've tried it myself, but they are too destructive. I've tried hiking on ATV trails in the off season when there's no one actually riding, and the trails are just mired in erosion and washouts and pooled water – essentially impassable on foot. And there's lots of wildlife that will not stay in an area that has motorized use of any kind or amount. Some uses just cannot be shared.

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 9:57 pm

Doug,

I agree its very hard sharing the trail. Horses may become frightened, if a mountain biker is riding toward them. Some separation is very helpful. At least they don't go up Tiger MT cable trail, try running that one.....

John Pope, Anacortes, WA
popejp@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 9:50 pm

Learn from Canada and Alaska and allow multiple use on the majority of trails, only restricting it when it is necessary to preserve life and truly endangered species. Our state is among the most blessed with public lands, but has more restrictions than most on allowing multiple use. Any trail open to hikers should be open to at least two or three other user groups, including trails in federal wilderness areas. We need to develop a culture of sharing the sandbox using common sense trail management and community adoption of trail maintenance. This generation of avoiding maintenance and preventing access really has damaged the overall ability of the citizen to enjoy nature in this state. I support many of the views I've seen in this blog, and hope the end result of the survey will be that the agencies and governments charged with serving us will be allowed to do so, support recreation once again. Relax the restrictions and enlist help from organized groups who will work for access.

Candace S Hunter
candyhunter@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 9:37 pm

In 2005 my husband and I road a tandem recumbent bicycle from MT St Helen's to San Francisco where we abandoned a one year trip. Paved road designated as bicycle routes were truly very dangerous. It would be nice to have a multipurpose network interconnected statewide roads with developed areas accessible for all off-road modalities. It would be safer than using the highway system. I pay extra fees to ride a motorcycle on the street and would not be opposed to paying a user fee. My question is the maintenance of these roads as Washington can't maintain the paved roads. I also agree with the need for an increase in firing ranges, it is an Olympic sport.

Linda Roe
lzroe1951@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 9:29 pm

I would like to see the access to the trails we do have maintained. I do not like the idea of mixing motorized and nonmotorized users. I do not like the idea of hiking on ATV tracks. If I want to breathe exhaust fumes, I can walk in the city. However, I do think that ATV users should have somewhere to ride where that kind of recreation does the least damage to the environment.

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 9:22 pm

Dave,

Very informative! Off-road vehicles are at the bottom of the totem pole in Washington. They should be able to go on the forest service roads/clear cuts/logging roads which there are a ton of. Even abandoned logging roads.

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 9:07 pm

Rodger,

WTA works on trails, and so does the FS, they even allow users to work a day on the trail to earn a pass for the year (Forest service).

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 9:03 pm

WE already pay the forest service for the trail pass and the state parks/DNR trails new 'Discovery Pass' for recreation.

KJ

kjrjatprairierim@aol.com

Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 8:42 pm

Loss of private forest land for trail use puts more pressure on public land use. All users need to respect each other and volunteer to help build and maintain trails for motorized and nonmotorized use. Paying user fees and volunteering will be very important to help keep back country trails open and growing to meet demands.

CAMPMEAT

dumprucksteve@yahoo.com

Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 8:21 pm

Stop being so ignorant on issues of OHV use. OPEN UP all roads for crying out loud. I have NEVER, EVER, in 12 years of riding my ATV in FERRY County, seen ONE other ATV rider in the woods. Get a life.

steve campbell

stevecampbellconstruction@gmail.com

Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 9:44 am

Yes the stealing of NOVA funds is a travesty, but just look at the national news this past week. We (somebody) vote these people in. Closer to home in the Methow valley of Okanagan County we are without any ATV trails! This is not cooperation but a "me only" attitude. There is room for all recreational user groups in this valley.

Fabian White

fabianwhite3@yahoo.com

Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 8:51 am

What are the most important priorities for improving backcountry trail recreation over the next five years?

1. Priority should be for maintenance of existing trails that actually get used the most. Gotta take care of your bread and butter trails first.
2. Replacing or adding signage for existing trails. I love an adventure but getting lost trying to find a trail or while doing a hike is a downer!
3. More vault toilets! I don't have a problem with Mother Nature but my family doesn't love the idea of having to "pop a squat" and that sometimes limits our choices.
4. Involve more "like" users, such as hikers and mountain bikers on the same trails to increase popularity and support.
5. Create "timely" awareness in local publications about the opportunities out there? The Bellingham Herald does a "Summer and Winter Guide" for activities throughout Bellingham and Whatcom county...tennis camps, swim classes, art workshops, etc. Why not pick a popular local Trail and do a short write up/advertisement with a picture? The "Entertainment News NW" is also another potential resource for something like this.

Kevin Ashe

d.iga@frontier.com

Submitted on 2013/05/17 at 6:48 am

Access to trails is just as important as the trails themselves. With road closures comes trail closures or at the least less used trails. If we don't fight to keep roads open trail planning is almost a mute idea. Once we get assurance that the FS and DNR will come up with a better plan for our mountain roads then it makes sense to come up with plans for our trails.

Byron Stuck
nmatrust@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/16 at 9:22 am

Kevin is right on "The most important priorities for improving back country trail over the next five years, is to increase the miles of multiple use trails."

But we also need to assure our funding base is defended as we've now discovered THREE times since Dave Hiatt above chronicled its creation. In recent years OUR elected officials decided to balance their State Parks budget by stealing \$9.6m of our NOVA funds. And then prior to that, our own governmental bureaucracy decided to dilute the motorized access to these funds by (poorly) conducting a fuel tax study and siphoning off significant funding and worse, decision making authority, for nonmotorized uses. And the third siphoning off (pun intended) was again by our ELECTED reps, this time deciding to limit our fuel tax rebate proportion. That happened when gas prices kept rising and our funding base would've been "more than we needed" in THEIR eyes, so they capped the amount we received and took the rest.

The idea of "pay to play" was ethically and responsibly important to us when we created the NOVA funding sources (gas tax rebates and ORV permits). Apparently ethics and responsibility weren't enough.

Please help us get more single track trail mileage, ATV use opportunities, and 4x4 off-road areas from our NOVA funding source ... while we still have it.

Byron Stuck
nmatrust@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/16 at 10:01 am

And I don't want to diminish the importance of the hiking, horse and mountain bike opportunities and their needs for funding, great volunteer contributions, etc. I'm just saying that the NOVA fund source wasn't created for those users (even though I hike, mountain bike, and ... rarely ... ride horses). The underserved group here is the motorized user ... and oh by the way ironically ... they're the original creator of NOVA (the V stands for vehicle).

Kevin Vanderhorst
chevykev@frontier.com
Submitted on 2013/05/16 at 1:43 am

There is an ever-growing demand for more motorized off-road areas. The #1 priority should be for increasing motorized/multiuse backcountry access. It has been mentioned before, that while OHV use is increasing dramatically, actual available land suited for said OHV use is decreasing, causing overuse of existing legal area. In my county of residence, there is NO OHV area available, which needs to change. By increasing OHV/multiuse access, the use and subsequent needed maintenance overall will decrease in a given area. Also, as Jim P stated, the 4x4 trails are the only true multiuse trails. I also agree that other user groups should also be required to pay for said access to multiuse trails, which would increase the available funds for maintaining/building new trails!

Herb Gerhardt
hgerhardt@wavecable.com
Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 9:19 pm

I have been volunteering for DNR for well over 10 years in the Tahuya-Green Mountain State Forests for well over 10 years. I am NOT an ORV'er but a hunter, fisherman, hiker, backpacker, i.e., I participate in nonmotorized recreation activities.

As a volunteer I have worked with both the motorized and nonmotorized users in our area and support everyone's desire to enjoy and recreate in the outdoors. We all have a right to recreate and the state has set up a funding program to fund such recreation. Although this funding program has been raided in the past, it has now been restored to support ALL recreation again. Money is what drives everything we do and from my observation, the secondary money is much, much greater than the money spent on creating trails and ORV areas. I see these \$50,000+ support vehicles come to our area on an almost daily basis. Besides the money that these users pour into our economy for their ORV's, horses, mountain bikes, hunting equipment, fishing equipment, camping equipment, etc, etc, they also pour lots of money into our local economy on shopping in the local area for supplies to support their outdoor activities. So yes, there is a financial payback from our recreation needs and the more opportunities people are given to recreate, the more money goes back into our economy, then there are the health benefits (both mental and physical health) from participating in these activities. The paybacks are endless.....

So now that I have tried to justify spending the money for recreational opportunities, I hope the state will build and maintain more outdoor recreational opportunities. The biggest need is for more ORV opportunities in different areas. Right now, due to the lack of ORV areas, there is an overuse of our Tahuya ORV area. The users have no choice, they have to recreate where they are allowed to recreate and we need to disperse some of this pressure to other areas. Along with building more ORV recreation areas, we also need to provide more Education and Enforcement personnel to keep things running smoothly. From my observations, we are lacking in on the ground Enforcement which give all of us a bad reputation with the local communities. Today, I observed 3 quads and 2 off-road motorcycles racing down our county road with no enforcement anywhere to be seen. This is a fairly common occurrence in our area and needs to be stopped.

Another area which needs be provided is some public target shooting areas where those who desire to shoot, can go and accomplish their recreational needs in a safe and sane manor. DNR and other state and local agencies have been totally ignoring the need for such recreational opportunities. So, target shooting areas must also be addressed in this 5 year plan! Just saying you can't shoot here, is not an acceptable solution.

girl

r-m-j@wildmail.com

Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 8:43 pm

I would have to say that trail access for hikers has decreased substantially. Trails close when bridges wash out and are not replaced. Trails close when logging occurs and are not replaced or reopened. Trails close when winter damage buries them, and they're not cleared for several years sometimes, if ever. Better maintenance, more timely maintenance, replacement of trails obliterated by logging, and faster replacement of bridges, cheaper flimsier bridges if necessary, are critical. Bridges are going to wash out regularly, no need to over-engineer them. And replacing bridges with fords is not good enough – that means the trail is inaccessible except in August and September, the only time of the year that most rivers can be safely waded. I read old hiking guides and I'm saddened by how much has been lost to logging and lack of maintenance and loss of bridges.

Mountain bikes should be allowed on trails and in wilderness areas. There's no good reason for excluding them. They're quiet, there's no exhaust, they're human-powered, and they can't produce any more erosion than horses do. Open trails to mountain bikes.

I'm in favor of multiple use, but not when it comes to mixing ORVs and ATVs with nonmotorized uses. Too much noise, too much exhaust, too much erosion and dust and mud. It's not just annoying to others, it's unsafe and it harasses the wildlife and coats the plant life with dust. The local ATV trails in the Capitol State Forest are basically unusable by anyone else due to the erosion and dust in summer, mud in winter, and the huge potholes they carve out that span the whole trail. I don't mind stepping aside to let people go by, but the ATV trails are too trashed to be used by anyone else. No multiple use possible there.

How about better trail signage in state wildlife areas? There's hiking trails there but no signage to tell you what trails are where and how long they are and where they go.

RW

wescnmbkr1@gmail.com

Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 7:31 pm

It sounds like all of us enjoying the great outdoors are tiring of the Bureaucracy demanding more funding from every one of us that is making up our population. The more population grows, the more the Bureaucrats take from us without stipulating where the funds are being spent. The bigger the Pot grows; it's who ever get's their hand in first grabs the largest amount. It should be specified where the funds are to be spent. EVERYONE using the trails, need to contribute to the Pot! We all need to be responsible for our usage, if you can haul it in, you can haul it out.

Greg Lovelady

GregL12@comcast.net

Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 6:51 pm

The plans should:

1. Encourage the Governor to defend trail funding programs, especially NOVA, RTP, and WWRP-Trails Category, before Congress and the State Legislature.
2. Continue to place a high priority on backcountry trail safety and maintenance projects.

Joan Fleming
joanfleming@q.com
Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 3:11 pm

Before building new trails, make sure that existing trails are kept open and repaired. This is especially true if the new trails will be limited to let's say one user group – hiking for example. Several user groups have limited numbers of trails open to them so that losing a trail and not replacing it with a comparable or better trail ends up cramming us onto fewer trails. This ends up with crowded and abused trails. Developing user groups for trail systems helps build relationships between user groups and provides a volunteer base for maintaining trails.

Joan Fleming
joanfleming@q.com
Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 3:02 pm

NOVA is funded by a combination of approx. 1% of gas taxes (recently that was about \$5 million dollars) and ORV Use Permits: <http://www.wta.org/action/current-issues/nova>. ORV's are not the only ones contributing to the gas taxes.

Kevin McGrath
reliable.kevin@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 11:19 am

The most important priorities for improving back country trail over the next five years, is to increase the miles of multiple use trails. While wilderness and hiker only opportunities have increased many times in recent years, opportunities for motorize use have shrunk dramatically. So dramatically, in fact, that overuse is causing substantial safety and maintenance concerns for the existing multiple use trails. OHV use causes no environmental damage in and of itself; OHV damage occurs only with overuse. It's time to stop the overuse issue by increasing available opportunities and stop the discrimination against motorized users.

Art Waugh
goldhammer88@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 11:13 am

The need for 4 wheel drive TRAILS is growing, and the current system is not meeting demand. Several of the current trails are at higher elevations, and not accessible for most of the year. More users are being jammed into ever smaller areas as other agencies are closing ground to access. This causes ever increasing conflicts with users as well as more resource damage, and in turn forcing more closures. There is a great need for lower elevation trails, especially on the west side of the state. (West of the Cascade Crest)

Dave Hiatt
dhiatt07@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 10:22 am

By the way, NOVA stands for Nonhighway Off-Road Vehicle Activities.

Keith
keithpeter@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 10:20 am

Thanks for the correction Tod!!

Dave Hiatt
dhiatt07@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 10:14 am

In the early 70's, despite a growing need for trails and facilities, there were virtually no state or federal funds available to land managers, counties or cities to provide for or maintain trails and recreation facilities for the rapidly growing and popular sport of off-road motorcycling. The motorized users decided to seek help in the legislature to provide for new funding. In 1971, this resulted in the passage of the Washington ATV Act. The 1972-73 ATV fuel use study estimated 4.6% of the state fuel tax to be produced by ATVs and other eligible vehicles by their use on trails and nonhighway roads. An amount of 1% of the state fuel tax was then written into the RCWs as representative of only the off-road and trail use by motorcycles and 4x4's and this amount was made available each year to the Inter-

Agency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) – NOVA program. It is important to note the motorized users gave up their State Constitutional right to an individual refund of their nonhighway & off-road gas tax moneys in exchange for this legislation.

The goal and purpose in the original NOVA program, as stated in IAC's own 1973 policy guidelines for ATV funds:

Goal

The goal of the IAC in its administration and distribution of ATV Funds is to increase the availability of trails and areas for all-terrain vehicles by operating a program to provide funding assistance to local and state agencies for the planning, acquisition, development and management of land and facilities for ATV use.

Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is three-fold. They will (1) define the manner through which the All-terrain Vehicle Funds shall be distributed, and the use for which they are specified; (2) prescribe methods and standards by which eligible offices of government may apply for funds to the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation; and (3) prescribe rules under which they may obtain moneys to defray expense for planning, acquiring, developing and managing recreational areas and trails for all-terrain vehicles.

This is a fund to provide off-road motorized recreation.

Unfortunately, government did not keep its word to the off-road vehicle (ORV) users when legislators were under political pressure by paid lobbyists from well funded, selfish, anti-access, hate groups like the WTA/Sierra Club, etc. plus an anti-access, anti-motorized fifth column (prior WTA Director on their Olympia staff) from within the Agency to which the ORV users had entrusted administration of their funds (now the RCO).

As a result, the legislature simply stole a large portion of the ORV user's funds for NON-ORV use instead of properly allocating money to them from remaining 1971 3.6% of the fuel tax monies generated by nonhighway roads. Nonhighway roads are any road not supported by WA State gas tax monies, e.g. all National Forest, BLM, National Park, private & other alphabet agency roads.

There is much more to this story regarding the travesty of theft from the Off-road Vehicle users and WA State is paying the price economically.

Oregon does a much better job of managing ORV funds to benefit the ORV users and as a result, annually adds an estimated \$290 million in equipment sales, \$245 million in trip expenditures and 2,369 jobs to their economy according to the 2008 Economic Impact of OHV Recreation in Oregon report to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department by Kreg Linberg, Oregon State University – Cascades Campus on 12/10/09. I now spend most of my off highway recreational dollars in Oregon.

I hope to live long enough to see the recent travesties of our WA ORV funding rectified so I can go back to spending my dollars in WA. Just contact me if you want a very well documented history of NOVA. I have experienced all of it from before 1971 to now.

Roger B Nelson
rogerramjet1961@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 8:36 am

Hi my name is Roger Nelson I am with a good organization called Backcountry Horseman Of Washington we are affiliated with Backcountry Horseman Of America and our mission statement is to perpetuate the common-sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's backcountry and wilderness to work to insure public lands stay open to recreational stock use, to assist various governmental and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resources ,I have been in the Pasyten wilderness many times in my life time and the trail crew is getting less money every year for maintaining trails. I am seeing this problem at the state and federal level. It would also help if funds like NOVA. Which is set up for state agencies for trail maintenance the money be used only just for that reason, the reality of it all with the state and federal agencies getting less money the different user groups will have to step up more and help out.

Tod Petersen
tod701@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/05/15 at 6:32 am

Keith,

As the law currently stands the only street legal motorcycles that are required to have an ORV permit to use trails are ones converted pursuant to RCW46.61.705.

William Woodland
stealthrunner117@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 9:55 pm

I'm with SquakMtn I think that if our NOVA funds are used for Mtn. bike/Horse/Hiking trails...They should PAY for the use!!!! Let's say license all bikes that use our roads like we do...and all hikers/horse riders need to pitch in with the Fees that we as 4x4/ORV riders have to pay!!!!.....NOVA National Off-road Vehicles Assn. Funds!!!!

If they are using Our Nova funds they need to pay like we do!!!! Stealthrunner!

SquakMtn
john-traeger@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 9:30 pm

Additional Mountain Bike trails should be a priority, along with expanded motorcycle single track. Both groups have been systematically cut out of trail usage in Western Washington, despite the Mountain biking user community becoming very large and well organized.

I agree with the comments about the NOVA funding originally being slated for motorized off-road trails and then unfairly ending up a portion being spent on nonmotorized trails. That being said, I would support expanding the ORV licensing to mountain bikes to increase the revenue base and justify some of the nonmotorized spending.

Eileen Burchett
lilpony001@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 8:36 pm

Trails are very important for any one that likes the outdoors.

Jacob Phillips
jacob.l.phillips@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 6:22 pm

Why are cross-country skiing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, sightseeing benefiting from the NOVA funds when they do not pay into them? These funds come from ORV gas purchases and tabs. We need more ORV trails because the current areas are HEAVILY over used due to the number of users versus the number of legal areas to recreate with motorized vehicles. NOVA funds should be used for ORV trails only. I also take part in these other activities, but they should be funded separately.

I like the idea of using the various groups, especially the motorized recreationists to help alleviate the expenses of maintaining other trail types. Motorized users could haul in equipment and perform maintenance and build new trails and haul out trash. We would be happy to do it.

4x4, ATV, and motorcycle maintain horse and single-track trails.

Horseback and motorcycle groups maintain hiking trails.

Hikers do self maintenance on the back country trails.

Jim Putman
jputman1@q.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 6:03 pm

We need more 4x4 trails that access the backcountry. Many people seem to think that we (as 4x4 users) just enjoy the driving for the driving but the truth is many of us enjoy being able to see the backcountry and visit remote areas to camp or just enjoy the scenery. The Forest Service is closing roads that everyday people like to use at an alarming rate these days. This severely limits access to those of us with disability's or people just lacking the health or time to hike for miles and miles. We all need to be more tolerant of each others choice of access mode and remember that 4x4 trails are the only true multiple use trails. (4x4s, quads, hikers, horses, mt bikers, motorcycles. Everyone can and does use the 4x4 trails.

Chris Marsh
thehouseofccccc@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 5:30 pm

Opening all public lands to every user group. Open LARGE private forest lands to motorized public. Tear down the gates. Stop the naturalistic bureaucracy. Places need to be open so the public doesn't have to drive 100 miles to use an ORV. If the goal is to be green, then it would be a lot greener for me to go out in the mountains in my back yard than to drive across the state.

matt r
thatguyisfly@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 4:36 pm

We all need to figure out how to get along out there on the trails (mountain bikes, hikers, or equestrian) and not try to ruin it for everyone except your preferred method of enjoying the great outdoors. If we don't figure out how to do this Washington can take it proverbial ball and not let anyone play.

Keith
keithpeter@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 11:45 am

Tricia,

They (street legal motorcycles) can ride on the FS roads if they pass street legal requirements and have a license. But there is a majority that are not street legal but pay for an ORV license. These can only be ridden on approved ORV trails. A street legal motorcycle can ride on the ORV trails if they also purchase an ORV license.

Keith
keithpeter@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 11:40 am

Fuel Taxes

The 18th amendment to the Washington State Constitution dedicates motor fuel tax collections to "highway purposes". Revenue generated from the gas tax is distributed to counties, cities and state accounts. The state receives about half of the total revenues collected. These are the funds which support the WSDOT highway programs as well as the Washington State Ferry System, which is deemed a state highway system by constitution. Highway construction, maintenance, preservation, administration and debt service on highway construction bonds are all funded by these revenues.

The other half of the fuel tax revenues are distributed directly to cities, counties and other agencies for roadway programs that are not part of the state highway system.

Doug
dmohr@vertafore.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 11:13 am

I am a big fan of mixed use trails. I have spent some time on my dual sport motorcycle in Colorado and Idaho where the trails are shared among hikers, mountain bikers, horseback enthusiasts, and off-road enthusiasts. As a responsible off-road vehicle owner it is upon each party to respect each others groups access to public lands and coexist in an environment that is not only constrained by the land we have available but also the local and federal budgets allocated to upkeep these public lands. I moved to the Northwest from Southern California where the answer was to close land to all users and designate it as wilderness due to a variety of issues related to the delicate ecosystem down south. The Northwest has plenty of natural resources that should allow us to share the available land and not cater to a single specialist group. We all enjoy the outdoors in our own way and just because I choose to explore via motorized travel vs. horse/foot/pedal power should not exclude me and others like me from sharing the trails.

audra
aadelberger@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 9:07 am

- 1) Provide every possible support to volunteer groups who do such terrific work, e.g. Washington Trails Association.
- 2) Carefully consider the downsides of "multi-use" trails. Hikers, horseback riders, and motorized vehicle riders are all seeking different kinds of recreation, different experiences. It works best when there is lots of segregation, I think, so there's a minimum of anger and frustration about noise, manure, trail damage, slowpoke walkers getting in the way, and so on. People love their kind of trail use, whatever it is: just think how different it is to zoom along on a motorized vehicle, ride on a horse, or walk. These things do not "just fit together"—one person's fun can all too easily be another person's fun wrecked. We should all have our preferences honored as much as possible.

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 8:32 am

Cheryl,

Have you tried East Cady ridge (Benchmark Mt/ W. Cady Ridge? Bridle trails in Bellevue or how about Crystal Mountain. While hiking these areas, I have noticed plenty of horse trails here, or how about Woodinville's Equestrian Park. What about Mt St Helens, there are a lot of miles available to ride in that vicinity also. People who own horses can attract your own user groups to lobby for support. There are 1000's of miles where there are clear cuts which a horse can get passed quickly, unlike a hiker who can only go 2mph average speed.

Doug Sauvage
dougsa@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 8:24 am

I'd be much more in support of opening up more trails to horses if the riders cleaned up after them. I hate washing poop off my shoes after a run on Cougar.

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 8:23 am

Robert,

What's wrong w/ riding ORV's or motorcycles on forest service roads or DNR roads? There is really a lot of exploring to be had in Washington.

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 8:14 am

Because there are very few disability accessible trails, I agree let the axe man ride on his off-road wheel chair—that's part of the multiple use act of public lands is for.

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 8:04 am

Right so where does the money for tabs go?

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 8:02 am

It would be great to have more trails for mountain biking/dirt bikes that beginners/intermediate riders can learn on. Motorcycles and ORV's have space to ride on forest service roads. Its legal even for minors according to a Kirkland, Washington policeman. Hikers can't complain that "they are ripping up the trail."

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 7:58 am

I recently read that State parks were going to get 74 % of the Discovery pass user fee, and DNR 8% and fish and wildlife 8%. This ratio division amount was recommended, even though state parks were originally going to receive the funds. I understood WASDOT gets monies from the gas tax.

I am confident someone can confirm or deny the amounts they get from the gas tax
John
ladmo@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 7:42 am

The mountain biking community is a fast growing segment of the users of this resource, and are currently locked out of many opportunities for land use. Mountain biking is a low impact activity that should not be grouped in with motorized activities. Our community has demonstrated willingness to assist in trail maintenance and new trail creation. I would like to see expanded mountain bike access to these public resources.

Any time large groups of people share anything, conflicts will occur. My experience however is that the vast majority of users, be they mountain bikers, hikers, or horse riders, go out of their way to be courteous and friendly. Let's not let the few cantankerous obnoxious people that are out there hijack the dialogue and encourage the false perception of the amount of discord that exists between the user groups which actually is exceedingly minimal.

Keith
keithpeter@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/14 at 5:14 am

What James doesn't realize is the funds collected via ORV tax should go to trails that ORV users are allowed to ride on.

Richard Bessey
richard@richardbessey.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 10:45 pm

I am requesting more single track for motorcycle riding in South-Western Washington. I have resorted to riding in Oregon a lot. Please look to Oregon for examples (Morrow County ORV Park – great example)

shrubitup
ontopofit@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 8:25 pm

Let the public recreate. Why all the restrictions? You think it's going to eliminate conflict? You can't please all the people even half the time. As far as nonmotorized uses are concerned there's wilderness, SRMAs, National Parks, ACECs, and other special management classifications. Those exclude motorized use so I ask you why areas outside these must also exclude motorized use?

Funny reading the comments here. One posted that they wanted better and faster access to Lake Isabel. Prior to Reiter Pit closure there was a day when you could ride a motorcycle up there. That'd be a little faster than the current access. Then the comments about Wild Sky Wilderness not developing new trails – I guess providing non-motor recreation in a Wilderness area is contrary to the intrinsic habitat value?

Then the comment from PBryant about motorcycle clubs adopting overgrown/abandoned/forgotten hiker trails. He's right! They'd be clear and open in a matter of weeks once the snow melts. If non-motor users don't have the numbers or ability to haul a chainsaw deep into the woods perhaps they and others would benefit from motor users who clear trails for free?

Fed and state governments don't need to spend money opening trails to the motorized community. Simply remove the legal barrier and we'll find our way along washed out logging roads to the primitive trail that needs clearing etc. More trail miles for all is the only way to reduce trail user conflict!

Deb
dwilson829@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 7:28 pm

Collaboration. It's clear there are enthusiasts of all types interested in access to recreation areas. We should use our funding for what it was intended, maintain the existing trail systems, and add more. Everyone benefits from a collective effort to make the trail systems they best they can be. The user population can expand as more trails are available, which leads to more traffic in local communities that will be in need of a boost to their economies.

Dave Schuldt
daveschuldt@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 7:26 pm

More trails open to mountain bikes would be great.

Seth Robertson
redrobertson@hotmail.co
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 6:20 pm

95% or more of my use of Washington outdoors is on foot hiking. I could be considered an "avid" hiker by most people's definitions. That said, our state should be absolutely ashamed at its treatment of ORV users as a whole. Reducing motorized trail mileage because of user conflict is unfair and illogical. Reducing motorized mileage to avoid erosion while allowing clear cutting in the same area makes one question the impartiality of those making decisions at both local and state levels. I am lucky enough to take my money to another state as far as off-road motorized access goes when I do engage in that activity. I still do most of my hiking in Washington, but my quiet protest is to funnel the (by far greater) money for motorized access to a state that doesn't treat me as a second class citizen while I do it.

Rob Taylor
tappstractor@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 3:47 pm

I also primarily ride dirt bikes on single track, love the back country, and mountains. We need more trails without any doubt but we also need to make better use of a lot of the trails we have. Many locations make it hard to connect from trail to trail with one trail ending just a mile or two down the road (gravel) from where the next begins. There should be an allowance for riding gravel roads with ORV tags in specific areas.

What I believe would help most is a lot more transparency in the funding, collecting, and allocation of all the monies gathered for "ORV funds". Wouldn't everyone like to know how much money is collected from the gas tax on off-road vehicles, tabs, and user fees? Then where it actually goes. It would feel a lot better knowing that the fees paid by ORV users actually go into the trails and camps we use.

Steve
stevejustham@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 2:39 pm

I primarily love riding dirt bikes and dual sport motorcycles on the forest roads and single track in the state. But, I am also a hiker, skier, mountain biker, fisher, and hope to get into snowmobiling someday. As a multi outdoor recreation user, I believe the state needs to do what it can to make sure everyone who benefits from outdoor recreation, as I do, gets a win out of the process, and not a loss. Win/win not win/lose, or lose/lose. Create a win/win for all recreationalists. Do not close trails or opportunities for us, create more opportunities. More money for the DNR is not the only way we can tackle the problem. Many states have created opportunities for local counties and small towns to benefit from outdoor recreation, by not making it a crime to ride off-road on a motorcycle or ATV, street legal or not, but by allowing users to legally enjoy their sports, instead of restricting their use, by making it a crime. In these states, these policies have created micro economies for these smaller counties or cities that benefit not only the user group (recreationalists), but the local residents and businesses. Make decisions that benefit us users, and the local municipalities.

James Scarlett-Lyon
sawatchboy@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 1:25 pm

I strongly believe in nonmotorized multi-use trails. I've been all over the west and have seen it work splendidly in many locations. HIKE, BIKE and HORSE. The 3 actually get along quite well.

Peter Nielson
nielson425@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 1:16 pm

Per the above report, why are the following activities benefiting from the NOVA funds when they do not pay into them, cross-country skiing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, sightseeing? As Tod states above, these funds come from ORV gas purchases and tabs. We need more ORV trails, especially in Western WA, because they are over crowded and showing it. NOVA funds should be used for ORV trails only. I also take part in these other activities, but they should be funded separately.

Claudia
claudiahunter@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 12:35 pm

I live near Mt St Helens and I agree with Darcy's comments. Please add me to your email list.

Keith
keithepeter@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 11:52 am

I am all about multiple use trails except in the wilderness areas where there are current restrictions

Joseph Wernex
jawernex@fairpoint.net
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 11:48 am

There is huge need for more single track motorized trails in WA State. Motorized trails are wearing out from lack of adequate maintenance even though motorized recreationists contribute more revenue than any other user group.

It is long past time for RICO to acknowledge the bigotry and anti-motorized prejudice that exists and act to stop it.

Tod Petersen
tod701@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 11:42 am

"Where exactly do monies come from to fund NOVA? Is it just motorized vehicles -users who contribute to this fund?"

Two sources:

About 2/3 of the funds come from motor vehicle fuel tax base on an estimate on how much is used on nonhighway roads and off-road.

The rest comes from off-road vehicle registration fees.

Ron Tennyson
ronsyellowyj@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 10:36 am

Repairing and improving existing trails and expanding the current trail systems and building new trails.

We should put some of the funds towards maintaining and repairing the trails that we have since trails are being closed we need to keep the trails we have open in good condition. We should build new trails or open ones that have been closed. All the trails should have multi use designations such as hiking and horse riding, motorcycle and 4x4 trails and even hiking and 4x4. The trails can be shared and used by multiple groups for the various activities.

There is a large network of logging roads, on public lands, that are closed off because they are not being actively logged. We should petition that these roads be opened for use of hiking, horse riding and motorized vehicle use. The expense should be a minimum since the roads are already there and the studies to put them in have already been done. This would help ease the congestion on some trail systems and allow users to access places that maybe haven't been accessed before.

Tootie Crowson
crowson2@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 9:48 am

We camped over the 4th of July at Mt. Adam's horse camp last summer. The year BEFORE that, there was fire damage near the camp, now this year we are told that there is no camping at the camp due to the fire?????

Paul Bryant
317peb@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 9:21 am

Maintain or improve level of opportunity for motor biking on primitive trails in Washington State. Hiking trails are quickly being overgrown and the State and feds have little to no money to maintain many of them. Why not let off-road motorcycle clubs have access and they will be cleared in short order. Every year many of the trails left in Washington where motorized access is allowed are cleared of windfall and brush by enthusiastic volunteers. Give us access to some more trails and we will preserve them, not let them get overgrown and impassable.

darcy
djmitchem@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 9:19 am

1) Roads. Ironic isn't it? The most important priority for backcountry recreation is not the trails itself, but maintaining the roads that lead to trails. No road means no access, no trail crews, no volunteers, and essentially no trail. At Mount St. Helens an entire system of trails on the north side of the Monument is often inaccessible because private roads leading to these trails do not have easements and are gated, or the public roads are washed out. Look at the trails along Mt. Loop Hwy—inaccessible for years because of washouts. At the same time the USFS is removing roads, and reducing maintenance. Because of NEPA and other laws, the process of fixing a washout is incredibly expensive, especially when compared with what private or state timberland would pay to fix the same road the same way. If all funding went on-the-ground we would be in much better shape, but paperwork takes a huge chunk of dollars. Road and access issues are the biggest problem, by far.

2) Recruitment of the next generation. Let's face it, backcountry recreation is getting old. We used to worry about too many people in the backcountry, and put up barriers like permits, regulation, and fees. Now the opposite is happening— We are not connecting the outdoors with youth. We need to remove barriers, and encourage more use and stewardship of the backcountry by young people.

3) To improve the trail system itself, loops and trails that connect with communities or other trails are always helpful. More motorized trails are probably needed, but not necessarily in the "backcountry". And of course, funding IF the money goes straight to the trail, and not to the EIS, SEPA, NEPA, EA, HPA, etc.

Keith
keithpeter@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 9:15 am

I have heard since it's inception that they were going to be new trails built in the Wild Sky Wilderness Area. I even went to some meetings where they allowed the public input on proposed new trails in the area. Then like always happens there was not budget in the Mount Baker/Snoqualmie Ranger District for trails. This was part of the stipulation for the creation of Wild Sky was new trails to help with revenue lost because of its creation. The Skykomish Ranger District already has had the plans for several years.

William
reson46@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 9:08 am

A return in equity to the distribution of trail funding and resources. An appalling amount of resources has been raided from funds like NOVA and used for projects and state entities for which they were never intended. It seems like every

year more of these funds are used to add to the already over abundant nonmotorized trail systems and less is used where they are actually needed on motorized trail systems. It is time that those funds are used to develop and support the trails systems for which those taxes were collected from.

Bob Bugert
bob@cdlandtrust.org
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 8:55 am

Multi-jurisdictional coordination on trails, since many planned or proposed trails cross multiple ownerships.

BestScenicRoutes.com
sean_mcdermott@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 8:38 am

Where exactly do monies come from to fund NOVA? Is it just motorized vehicles -users who contribute to this fund?

Brian Johnson
brian.johnson@stickydrive.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 8:32 am

The most important priority in OHV trail recreation over the next 5 years is to create and maintain iron-clad legislation and funding for this recreational purpose.

I have served on various committees for Washington ORV/OHV trails since 1975. The over-arching issue has never changed. The use of trails and funding to support trails has constantly been under siege.

Definition: Siege – The act or process of surrounding and attacking in such a way as to isolate it from help and supplies, for the purpose of lessening the resistance of the defenders and thereby making capture possible.

I believe that the use of fees to users should be either directly (or indirectly if needed) ear-marked for lobbyist and legislative support dedicated to this recreation.

As high priority specific action – I would recommend a legal advisory committee be assigned to review all legislative documents around OHV funding resources, and provide an action plan to create and maintain legislative documentation for funding and use of trails for OHV use.

Simple stated, if we don't create and maintain the legal right to use trails, nor funds to maintain them, nothing else will really matter. (You don't need trail maintenance, or campgrounds, or anything if you have no place to ride and no way to pay for it)

Tommy Thombs
tthombstahuyafire@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 8:08 am

Location and accessibility.

Keith W
kwisn@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 7:56 am

Multiple use trails to satisfy the most user groups.

Cheryl Conklin
cherylconk@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 7:14 am

State lands have a lot of trails devoted solely to hikers, but not a lot that horseback riders can use. Sometimes the exclusion of horseback riders from a given trail does not seem to be justified and leaves the equestrian-accessible trails so limited that it is not worth the time to trailer a horse to the few miles one can ride. For example, only a small portion of trails on Cougar Mountain can be ridden on horseback; meanwhile, the connector trails to other trail systems, i.e. Squak Mountain, which again would create a meaningful trail system for horseback riding, are not open to equestrians. For horseback riders, a trail system needs a minimum of 12-15 miles. When developing new trails or

reviewing current trails, the state should ask “why not allow equestrians on this trail?” and “how can we make this trail system large enough for equestrians?”

Cathy Johnson
cathy.johnson@kingcounty.gov
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 6:57 am

I believe that trail maintenance is a critical priority for improving trail recreation. As budget cuts have reduced funding for trail maintenance, volunteer groups have had to step up to fill the gap. This has worked really well at Elbe Hills, where a local Backcountry chapter has managed trail maintenance for years, working with the State DNR. DNR pays for the materials, which is nice. I worry about what would happen if DNR could no longer afford to pay for the materials, as the trails have areas where bridges, steps, water bars, and other features are needed for safe passage with horses.

Tod Petersen
tod701@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 6:50 am

Expand trail mileage for all types of trail users.

Robert Lind
clutch250f@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/13 at 2:45 am

Opening up more ORV trails as Washington State keeps closing our riding areas we keep having to use the same ones over and over again, causing them to become over crowded and extremely dangerous. As I pay too much for my ORV tabs for this money to be squandered else where for activities that really don't have anything to do with my sport I find it extremely difficult to have a desire to continue to ride one on authorized riding areas within Washington State or even bother purchasing ORV Tabs when I see that apparently Frisbee golf is more important to our “great” Politicians then a sport that is a cash cow for this state.

I have watched as my sport (Dirt Biking) has been demonized by a lot of groups and politicians as being damaging for the environment yet when I have been to other states and have seen that their parks are not only larger but better maintained for less. Yet this state has been constantly telling us we don't matter for park use. The fact that on the west side alone we have really two places to ride, Capital Forest and Belfair. Capital Forest being closed during the winter doesn't help for making it safer to ride at Belfair. I've personally have had to change the way I go to Belfair because of how dangerous these politicians have made it. By closing other ORV parks they forced a large number of people to one area. Now over crowded and unmaintained trails have lead to deteriorated trails that once were very fun and safe to some often unrideable and extremely dangerous.

The other conditions forced upon us is this Discover Pass. Forcing us to pay to use an area I already paid for when I purchased my ORV tabs every year for an increasing amount of money. I use to for one day of riding, (all went to local shops) for gas and snacks about \$80 before tabs. Now all the money the state has collected in taxes off of my purchases, \$75 a year for tabs for one bike, roughly \$3,000 in taxes for my truck, \$156 for truck tabs, \$20 more in gas taxes and finally all the taxes collected for our gear which can be roughly \$400. You can venture to guess that we don't support having to pay anymore then our fair share.

These conditions force us in the off-road community to ride in unauthorized areas, purchases gear and our vehicles in other states that actually supports us. It's not our fault that politicians keep demonizing a sport they know nothing about, or how they want to kill it because it sounds mean and evil. You'd have more community support for any park project and get volunteers by opening up more land and giving us a place to ride instead of trying to kill us by closing them down and making us illegal. It's also very funny to us that you can smoke pot in Washington yet you can't go riding on public lands with your family on dirt bikes with out getting tickets or your bike taken away for park rangers.

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/12 at 11:18 pm

Last weekend, I hiked Robe canyon w/ my five year old. (on the Mountain Loop Highway) It is a very popular hike for families and many people were drawn past the sign that tells you it is hazardous. It needs to be made safer for families in order to reach the (first) tunnel that families want to get to.

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/12 at 11:02 pm

It would be great to add more accessible trails to lakes such as Lake Isabel and accessing Jay, Shaw Lake from the Sultan Basin for example. It appears to be less miles to hike if there were directions from Sultan basin. From the times I have seen Jay, Shaw, and the Wallace Lake there is no beach access to spend time there. There is a peek a boo view of the Wallace lake. The most beautiful places are far and difficult to get to, so I am advocating reaching locations within an hours drive or less for trail pass holders, from (for example) King and Snohomish county.

The Barclay lake trail is heavily used, and there appears to be a garbage problem, even though there is a can at the trailhead. People are not respecting carry it in carry it out,

Jay Brand
whiskeyspitranch@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/05/12 at 9:36 pm

Please add me to your email list

jim
jjocoffee@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/05/12 at 9:05 pm

Expand single track for motorcycle riding in western Washington

ziggy gevers
wilycpc@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/12 at 9:03 pm

Mountain biking trails, trail running, and also backpacking! ;)

Jean
Jeans4U@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/05/12 at 9:00 pm

I strongly believe in this!

Jean
Jeans4U@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/05/12 at 8:58 pm

I feel that we should make it a priority to keep all backcountry trails accessible to hikers and horseback riders. I'm a volunteer that spends many hours with the upkeep of these trails and making them usable to horseback riders. We need to keep the funding available to DNR in order for the necessary equipment and supplies for bridges, cleaning up downed trees across these trails, etc. With all the volunteer hours people put in it saves the government a lot of money that they don't have to pay employees.

Thank you!

JimEG
olywajim@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/12 at 8:00 pm

More unsurfaced bicycle trails – "mountain bike".

Thanks!

Al Pelletier
sekiusweep@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/12 at 6:59 pm

Trails are nice. But if funding is scarce, please do not lock people out of areas, just because there is not a world-class walking path. Certainly warnings should be placed advising of the primitive nature (or lack of) a trail. Perhaps advice

about “own risk,” and “own responsibility for rescue” would be appropriate. I am just saying that semi-wilderness doesn’t have to be like a city park, for people to enjoy it.

In many cases, state land can be used to provide access to trails, or logging roads or streams on adjacent private forest lands or national forests. I envision a way to walk, cycle or horseback from places like Lake Ozette to places like Amanda Park. Many forest lands allow nonmotorized use, but there needs to be a place to get off the pavement, park, and unload.

Lastly, I know an ex “Axe man” who has a gas-powered, 4WD off-road wheelchair! I believe handicapped persons should be allowed to use powered transportation on some otherwise nonmotorized areas.

B Burnett
holnam@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/12 at 6:42 pm

Please do not let the powers that be raid the NOVA funds as they did before.

ROUND 2 FINDINGS

Round 2 Question

Trail providers need money to maintain trails and to develop new trails; but they do not have enough money to do both completely. What is the right way to balance these priorities?

Summary Observations by the Blog Facilitator

In this round of discussion, 44 people commented, providing 44 comments. Below is a summary of the themes of the comments, followed by a *verbatim* reporting of all comments.

Funding Was the Most Frequent Theme of the Comments Provided

One Town Hall contributor observed that, “I am a little surprised at how many commenters have focused on where to find more funding; I interpreted the question as asking about how to set priorities for existing funding. But, I value reading ALL comments and thank everyone for making them.”

Comments about funding ranged from:

- Calls for no additional spending using the logics of: living-within-our-means, just make the hard choices between maintenance and new development, and user fees are inequitable for low income citizens, to
- Calls for balancing spending between recreation sectors using the logic of fairness in a way that matches the tax contributions of the different sectors, to
- Calls for coordinated efforts to secure more and stable funding using the logic that recreation maintenance and development are valuable investments in their own right, ones that pay an appropriate return to the government.

Specific suggestions provided by Town Hall contributors included:

- **NOVA funding allocations.** There are strong feelings in the ORV community that past government allocation decisions surrounding the NOVA account have been wrong. The main theme of these concerns is that ATV users are not receiving spending allocations that match the level of their tax contributions. The solutions offered were consistently around the idea of returning to an allocation that is commensurate with tax contributions. As one commenter put it, “The solution is to have the RCO support returning a full 1% [i.e., the ORV tax contributions] to benefit (see JLARC report) its rightful owners, the ORV users. The RCO should then work with the nonmotorized users to obtain their own funding from the remaining 3.6% instead of stealing from the ORV users.”
- **Increasing user fees.** The idea most often expressed by these contributors is that use reflects demand and user fees should reflect the differences in demand for different recreation activities. There also were some calls for creating, “...a user fee similar to

ORV tabs for nonmotorized bicycles, horseback, and hikers”. One contributor proposed, “I would create a ‘Week in Washington’ pass for tourists, and use it as a promotional item: free state map, week DP [Discovery Pass good for one week], coupons, promotions etc.”

- **Make grant-making easier.** “Grants need to be easier—less administration and overhead, more on the ground. Stop making DNR, Parks, and WDFW go through the whole 2-year RCO process—just give them \$ to fix trails without all the dog-and-pony show waste. The RCO guidelines need to value economy, efficiency, and simplicity more.”
- **Just make the hard decisions.** “The balance of these priorities should swing toward maintaining existing trail systems. Washington has a number of backlogged trail maintenance issues that affect the safety and quality of the trail user’s experience. New trail systems should only be built when there is a clear funding mechanism to support the new trail system.”
- **Use volunteers.** Many contributors pointed, with pride, to extensive contributions already being made to the public trails system by volunteers, usually through organized groups. As one commenter put it, “For example, part of the mission of the Back Country Horsemen is their annual commitment of thousands of volunteer man hours & the use of their equipment, horses & pack animals to clear & repair & create new trails for the benefit of walkers, hikers & bicycle rides as well as recreational horsemen on nonmotorized trails.” Town Hall contributors frequently called for increasing this use of public-spirited volunteer contributions for both maintenance and new development. To make this happen, respondents noted several kinds of actions that would help:
 - Provide incentives to individuals. As stated by one person, “As an incentive for persons to actively participate [volunteer] several times, they should be given some compensation such as a discount on the user fee or as WDNR gives a free pass for logging 24 hrs. of volunteer service.”
 - Provide liability relief.
 - Provide relief from onerous standards.

Prioritizing Limited Resources

There were many comments about different ways to think about the prioritization of government spending.

- **Recognize different management needs.** Some contributors expanded the usual definition of what should be considered a trail in RCO funding decisions. These people called upon decision makers to provide different policies that are aligned with the inherently different management needs of different types of trails. For example, “Trails in more suburban and interurban areas require public input and the balanced view of other needs. They also require consideration of the near term population growth that

may interfere with or conflict with trail use or trail maintenance and the changing needs of the area. Generally, these areas require more administration, money, and resources than undeveloped areas.”

- **Prioritize public safety.** One contributor said, “Some priority has to be assigned to the work inventory that is the most urgent for safety issues and secondarily to work that serves a balance of use to the user groups with an eye to the groups most willing to contribute to the work that needs to be done.”
 - **Balance between demand and cost.** As stated by one contributor, “Focus of the trail systems that provide the most recreational opportunity for the least out of pocket cost, those that attract the most volunteer interest and donated capital expense has been and appears to be a thoughtful approach for the next term of years.” Another commented, “People will ‘vote with their feet.’ The trails of all types that get the most use will need, and get, the most funding for maintenance.”
 - **Balance between demand and the maintenance burden.** A Town Hall contributor explained, “...I feel the highest priority should be to provide funding for trail maintenance over trail development. However, development of new trails in areas for user groups that are under served should also be considered as a high priority if there is a clear long term commitment that has been made for them to be maintained by the user groups, and if providing the new trail does not adversely affect the area or other users in that area. Without the maintenance commitment, it makes no sense to pursue new trail development.”
 - **Balance equal opportunity in decision making.** As stated by one contributor, “While I support maintenance of existing trails over construction of new trails, I do feel that there needs to be a mechanism for evaluating the need for a new trail. For example, if a large geographic area has no accessible trails suitable for one or more recreational groups, and a viable plan for construction and sustained maintenance of a suitable new trail is presented, it should be considered. However, I think that should be the exception, not the rule.”
-

Verbatim Comments from the Town Hall Web site in Response to Round 2

Mike Dawson
gwazala@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/08 at 9:45 am

Both trail maintenance and new construction need more funding. If you look at the ratio of trails to population size, the situation has gotten worse and worse over the decades. Trailheads and campgrounds have become so crowded as to be inaccessible or unpleasant to those seeking simple outdoor recreation on our public lands. Yet we have vast areas, in the forests at least, where use could be spread out to accommodate the crowds and provide better recreational experiences. In addition, conflicts between motorized and nonmotorized users are increasing. The evidence is clear that demand outstrips availability when it comes to trails.

Creativity will be needed to find funding solutions. Forget about the status quo and look for new ideas to get at the big picture: Restoring our lost heritage of inexpensive, uncrowded, outdoor recreation on public lands.

Jenifer Taylor
Submitted on 2013/06/06 at 1:28 pm

From the Moderator: Comment submitted by email.

Hello,

The thing that bothers me the most is trails with noisy vehicles of any kind using the part I want to walk on. If they are confined to a given area, I can just walk elsewhere. Stock poop is a minor annoyance compared to vehicles. I am a hiker and an old horse rider so I know the attraction of the trails in the mountains, but still hope many of them will be available for us 2 legged types. Four legged types do damage narrow trails pretty badly, thinking of the trails like that from Camp Handy to Boulder Shelter.

Glad you are working on the big plan.

Shannon Good
Xany@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/06/06 at 12:10 pm

I think maintenance of existing trails should be emphasized over building new ones. If trails are not maintained (such as removing blow downs and washouts) they become very user unfriendly. We see this happening in the national forest trails and in wilderness areas all the time. We have a good system of recreational trails – but they need to be kept in decent condition to be used. I realize that these trails are managed by varied agencies – but that could be coordinated at state level. The point is, let's keep what we have in good repair!

On a local level, volunteers make a world of difference. In Mount Vernon, we have built a destination worthy mountain bike & hiker trail network at Little Mountain. All built by volunteers. We are seeing diverse user groups and families getting outside & exercising in a natural place – some of these folks may develop healthy lifestyle habits from these small beginnings.

Beth Blay
bbinaz@earthlink.net
Submitted on 2013/06/06 at 9:03 am

The issue is on-going and difficult, but keeping up existing trails should be the top priority as once lost, we may never have them again... Private funding and volunteer work can sustain this while the government entities regroup. Stop the raids by govt. of funds earmarked for trails and do not permit further tapping into that till...

Dave
grumpyscoutii@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/05 at 7:57 pm

Maintain what is there before spending any more of our hard earned tax dollars! And let's get better balance in who participates in the planning process. I am part of the full size 4x4 community, and, in my opinion, we are not given equal time in trail issues. We keep being pushed into smaller an area, which leads to more issues, which lead to more closures. Seeing a pattern here? Start treating us as a legitimate user group.

John Palmer
zigstermeister@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/03 at 8:59 pm

Proper maintaining and rebuilding existing trails to withstand the demands of its current users should come first. Groups responsible for this need to follow and enforce a set standard for achieving this. Easier said than done, working with volunteers this can prove to be difficult. Educating those that volunteer and making sure they have a good understanding of trail construction should be a priority. The WTA is a great organization that has a good structure for implementing this in my experience.

Anita Matthay
amatthay@olypen.com
Submitted on 2013/06/03 at 4:46 pm

I'm an older hiker on the Olympic Peninsula and love my twice weekly hikes to challenge myself, stay in shape, socialize with friends and enjoy the peace, beauty and quiet of the great outdoors. I volunteered with WTA when I lived near the Cascades. Our wilderness will be an ever greater tourist draw in the future. I like the first idea of corporate sponsors, and thought Al Pelletier's comments sounded sensible. Didn't read all comments.

Cathy
cathy.johnson@kingcounty.gov
Submitted on 2013/06/03 at 6:16 am

We need to maintain the trails we have first, then any money left over can go to build new trails where demand exists.

Gary Hagland
haglandg@toriiittraining.com
Submitted on 2013/06/02 at 9:56 pm

The State of Washington does not suffer from a lack of trails. Maintain the ones that exist.

Richard Coulson
stiqquest@wavecable.com
Submitted on 2013/06/02 at 3:36 pm

Richard Coulson

As a user of trails on the North Olympic Peninsula, it is very discouraging to try to re-instate the right to legally access the US Forest Service to ride ATV's. As others have stated, when you have to deal with Government Official and all the timeless and mountainous paperwork, you could grow a new Old Growth Forest. An example of this is their ability to stonewall by not adhering to their own rules. By their own rules, they are mandated to establish a forest plan every 10-15 years. The last time one was done on the Olympic National Forest was 1991. As you can see this was 22 years ago. The best that I have been able to garner from a "Responsible Official" is they don't have enough money. Who does?

IN the meantime my generation (Babyboomer) is slowly dying off. It would seem that what I see and hear from other user groups is right on fix and maintain before expanding and get Big Government out of the way.

Forest Shomer
inspass@whidbey.net
Submitted on 2013/05/31 at 10:49 pm

Focus first on maintenance of existing trails. Adding trails potentially adds to the overburden of trails not receiving sufficient maintenance—compounds the problem.

John
john@moosefish.com
Submitted on 2013/05/31 at 8:17 am

I believe the balance between maintaining existing trails and developing new trails should reflect use patterns. A trail that receives high usage should receive more maintenance funding than a trail that is rarely used. The exception is that if a seldom used trail is unsafe it should be assessed for closure or repair.

New trails should be developed to accommodate usage. The decision to develop a new, more sustainable trail up Mailbox Peak near North Bend is a good example of this principle. As trails in the area became overloaded, the existing Mailbox Peak trail experienced a surge in traffic. However, the rough trail has sections that are unsafe for hikers unfamiliar with the short, steep route. The new trail will ease traffic on surrounding trails such as Mt. Si and provide a safe and less intense experience for hikers.

I am in favor of reasonable user fees to fund improvements as well as partnerships with local advocacy and user groups.

Lori Flemm
loriflemm@live.com
Submitted on 2013/05/30 at 7:35 pm

Generally speaking, I don't think we should build a new trail that can't be maintained. The maintenance management plan should be defined before the trail is constructed. Balance should be a local decision; it would be tough to achieve balance on a statewide level. I hope our state grant programs won't devote funds only toward statewide priorities. Each trail provider has to identify their own priorities. Priorities change, and seem to change before the next plan is written.

Few people are satisfied maintaining existing trails. People always want more and want new. Look at how many trails are created by users going off trail. Within a week of opening a new regional asphalt bicycle/pedestrian trail in our city, many were calling for it to be extended closer to their home.

Volunteers (eagle scouts, church groups, and students) are building a municipal hiking trail in our city that the neighborhood trail users are maintaining because they appreciate having the trail close to home, and want to see it remain in good shape. Minimal public dollars and staff time have been used for construction or maintenance. We would not have the trails we have in our state without volunteers.

Claudia Johnson
jojohnso@charter.net
Submitted on 2013/05/29 at 10:12 pm

I find your request for feedback to be very non-user friendly. Some of us really care about trails, but are not experts on the state of trails in WA and need more details or at least a simple summary to go on. We might now our trail systems close to home, but might not now the overall state wide picture. You don't provide any summaries of where trails are now, their status, pictures? You are assuming that folks will read the 56 page Nova plan (2005-2011). I did, it was not helpful. Why don't share some maps of where existing trails are, how they are distributed across the state or by zip code and how the funding is distributed? Where are the proposed new trails located? How much would it cost to bring in new trails into service (an estimate per mile of trail would be nice)? Is the distribution of trails equal by region? Zip code? Race? Income level? What trails are available to disabled users/wheelchair accessible? What is a basic description of the current trail situation that we could read to provide you with some feedback? Social media is great—but the onus is on government to make its data accessible and easy to read—if it really wants comment from the public at large. Otherwise, this is just a formality with little meaning—just the appearance of an open process.

Earl Nettin
esnettinn@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/05/29 at 7:44 pm

We need to maintain the trails we have with no closures. Volunteers are always ready to help. Let's make use of them.

Helen M
helenorjohn@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/05/29 at 3:29 pm

I believe existing trails and access to existing trails should take priority. I would like to see the road to Excelsior trailhead be repaired, also the road to Canyon Creek.

Norm
normbuckley@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/05/29 at 11:17 am

My two cents worth: Maintain existing trails and access roads as the highest priority.

Mike McGlenn
mike@mikemcglenn.com
Submitted on 2013/05/29 at 10:22 am

The current back log of trail maintenance is growing daily. The fires, the pine beetle and other issues have really set things back and will for the foreseeable future. Maintaining the current trails to standard in most cases should be the first priority. On a national basis, collaboration and partnerships with other user groups has been a big help in stretching the dollars available. In the case of horsemen, we seem to be getting older and less able to do some of the ground work. But we can pack in tools, supplies, materials, food and camps for folks like the Washington Trails Association so that younger backs can get the ground work done. Look for ways to partner with nontraditional groups. Conservation groups will help work on trails. Sports teams, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts anyone who enjoys being out doors can help. Volunteers will put in many hours opening up and maintaining their access to the outdoors. It would be helpful to streamline the bureaucratic paperwork machine that in many cases makes it very difficult to volunteer. Make it easier for all of us, horsemen, hikers, bikers to do the work needed and it will make the money go farther.

Logan
logan.riggs@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/28 at 1:36 pm

I think that maintaining existing trails should be the highest priority. 100 eroded trails covered in blowdown are pretty much useless to anybody. If there is not enough money to keep 'enough' trails maintained then what good does it do to build another trail that will succumb to lack of maintenance? I imagine you can maintain 10 miles of trail or more for the cost of opening 1 new mile.

Darrell Wallace
exec@bchw.org
Submitted on 2013/05/28 at 11:21 am

While I support maintenance of existing trails over construction of new trails, I do feel that there needs to be a mechanism for evaluating the need for a new trail. For example, if a large geographic area has no accessible trails suitable for one or more recreational groups, and a viable plan for construction and sustained maintenance of a suitable new trail is presented, it should be considered. However, I think that should be the exception, not the rule.

I am a little surprised at how many commenters have focused on where to find more funding; I interpreted the question as asking about how to set priorities for existing funding. But I value reading ALL comments and thank everyone for making them.

darcy
djmitchem@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/28 at 10:52 am

Over the last decade I have seen our rural quality-of-life erode—and a lot of it traces to the collapse of forestry providing honorable family wage jobs. The USFS has no money or jobs to speak of since the spotted owl. Mechanization and high L & I also have reduced employment. Rural communities, like mine, have lost mills that paid taxes and supported public works. Instead, our county is currently thinking of giving away its parks. Once vibrant communities like Morton, Packwood, and Darrington are shriveling, and trying to rely on "tourism". We seem to find plenty of ways and funding to save salmon, save owls, save wolves, save wetlands, but we are failing to save our communities. Gallantly, citizens have stepped up with friends groups, clubs, partnerships and other volunteer efforts. These are good, and need to continue, but more funding is needed. The Discover Pass was a noble idea, but administered badly—doing more harm than good, and putting more burden on fewer people. I would create a "Week in Washington" pass for tourists, and use it as a promotional item: free state map, week DP, coupons, promotions etc. But our system threatens and scares tourists—they show up at a beach and can't even buy a pass on site!

Meanwhile, thousands—even millions—of acres of private timberlands are being closed to public recreation or moved to a pay or lease model. These timberlands pay pennies per acre in property taxes while systematically removing "public benefits" that justified these low rates in the first place. I believe a review of tax breaks here is appropriate, with any additional income dedicated to providing recreation on public lands to compensate for the loss on private. Also, income from private land leases and fees should be rolled into the hotel/motel tax or timber excise tax with that funding dedicated to providing recreation on public lands. The idea of reviewing our tax policies was discussed in the new SCORP, and needs to be taken seriously.

I also believe barriers to volunteers (supported by public employee unions) need to be removed. We must get past this protectionism. Grants need to be easier—less administration and overhead, more on the ground. Stop making DNR, Parks, and WDFW go through the whole 2-year RCO process—just give them \$ to fix trails without all the dog-and-pony show waste. The RCO guidelines need to value economy, efficiency, and simplicity more. Our laws need updated and overhead capped—Replace SEPA with best management practices. 90% + of every dollar should go on the ground. Primitive dirt trails and gravel parking lots (which because of ADA are basically shunned) should be encouraged. Get creative with funding, too. Business partnerships, concessions, leases, sponsorships, camp hosts, maintenance partnerships with cities and schools, Metropolitan Park Districts—many things are possible with flexibility. Imagine how much money a coffee cart at a popular beach or trailhead could bring in!

A portion of the general fund should go to cover the “conservation” missions of state public lands. Why should recreationists alone pay for archaeology, wetland preservation, old growth studies, endangered species and other items unrelated to recreation facilities/or game species? These areas benefit the whole population. In general, we need to comb our laws and policies and find efficiencies, scrutinize regulations, review incentives, create opportunity, remove barriers, and focus funds on the ground.

Steve
stevejustham@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/28 at 9:50 am

Volunteers can maintain and create most if not all of the trails in the ORV community, and are already doing that a fair amount.

Requiring expensive environmental studies and other hurdles created to slow or reverse the new trail building process, is a waste of money and has made it difficult to move forward with new trails being built, and is used as a deterrent by anti ORV groups, which just wastes time and taxpayers money.

Get user groups to do the trail maintenance and develop new trails.
William
reson46@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/28 at 8:56 am

Completely agree with Dave Hiatt. The NOVA fund has been continually eroded and completely raided in the past. It needs to be restored to its original purpose. If the taxes I contribute through OHV use were actually used for OHV trails, there would be no funding issues.

Keith Wisnieski
kwisn@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/05/28 at 7:58 am

Every user should help fund maintaining existing trails and establishing new trail. Each user should be responsible to pay their fair share and not depend on the largess of another group.

Maintaining trails should have priority over new trail development.

Linda N. McAskill
lmcask1@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/05/28 at 6:59 am

There are many groups that could be communicated with that would be willing to volunteer for maintaining trails, such as the military. Washington State has many military personnel that might like very much to explore and work on trails in urban and high country, partnering with DNR or USFS on projects, might just need a schedule and or transportation.

Should avoid user fees and or higher user fees, so all the public can enjoy the outdoors. Nonmotorized use is my preferred use of funds. Enjoys the sights and sounds of being outdoors!

Kathy Young
kyoung1735@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/05/27 at 8:29 pm

I certainly agree with the comments of Mr. Ron Downing, Volunteers are an invaluable resource in maintaining trails and backcountry facilities, I have seen the level of dedication and the abilities of these volunteers when building and

clearing trails. It will continue to be advantageous for the various user groups to work cooperatively with the government agencies to keep our trails open.

Joan Fleming
joanfleming@q.com
Submitted on 2013/05/27 at 5:52 pm

Areas like Capitol Forest near Olympia get a lot done with heavy participation by user groups. Also, grants are applied for well in advance to acquire the materials needed to get the work done. So, despite insufficient Discover Pass funds, projects are getting done. Development of strong, cooperative user groups goes a long way towards keeping trails open.

Ron Downing
vpfarm@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/27 at 3:59 pm

Trails in undeveloped areas have been developed in large part by the equine community as a matter of need or preference for transportation or recreation. Clearing the right of way has been done as needed by the users. Over the past 50 years of my experience with trail building and maintenance, most of this work has been done in private-public partnerships with most of the capital assets funded by the public agency. Some priority has to be assigned to the work inventory that is the most urgent for safety issues and secondarily to work that serves a balance of use to the user groups with an eye to the groups most willing to contribute to the work to be done. The value of the volunteer commitment can be used to supplement the agency budget directly and in support of grants, matching and in full. Trails in more suburban and interurban areas require public input and the balanced view of other needs and the near term population growth that may inter fear with or conflict with trail use or trail maintenance and the changing needs of the area. Generally, these areas require more administration, money, and resource than undeveloped areas. Focus of the trail systems that provide the most recreational opportunity for the least out of pocket cost, those that attract the most volunteer interest and donated capital expense has been and appears to be a thoughtful approach for the next term of years. When the economy gets stronger and as agency budgets that have jurisdiction over these areas can be restored, lesser priority or higher cost projects not funded could be approached. Trails and facilities not maintained due to budget shortfalls should be signed as not maintained for liability issues, but allowed to remain open for use as long safety and other concerns are not acute.

David Overfield
kdx220dave@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/05/27 at 3:09 pm

Charge a user fee similar to ORV tabs for nonmotorized. Bicycles, Horseback, Hikers,

In my opinion we are not getting enough of the Discover pass money the State Parks need to raise their fees to support themselves.

Jack
horsedoc@rainierconnect.com
Submitted on 2013/05/27 at 11:53 am

I am an outdoorsman. When I was younger, hiking was foremost in my recreation. After getting older I have resorted to riding those same trails on my mule. On almost all trail rides we perform some trail work, from removing downed trees to clearing brush and replacing water bars. I have found a tremendous amount of satisfaction working with other user groups like Washington Trails Association, Pacific Crest Trails Association, ORV clubs and the Boy Scouts. We all have one thing in common, and that is to enjoy the backcountry.

Backcountry stock (horse, mule and pack-stock) activity is up 14% over the last year. It continues to rise after following our recent "recession". As stock use increases, the amount of funding for it should also increase, and should be proportionate to the volunteer hours we spend improving the trails we all use.

RW
wescnmbkr1@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/27 at 9:45 am

A few years ago while employed by REI, we were asked to donate time to work on several trails in the Cascades. Quite a number of employees agreed to donate their time and some included some materials and equipment.

So before I give my opinion as to where to get more funds for these projects, I would like to see a dedicated report of where the present funds are being spent and the amount of dollars presently spent, as well as where these funds are coming from. Every administration and division has out stretched arms asking for MORE!!!

Gavin Glore
gavinglore@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/05/26 at 4:07 pm

Priority should be given to the user groups who support and maintain the existing and planned trails on public land. There are numerous non-profit groups who help with maintenance, construction and stewardship of the state forests that they patronize. As the demographics of our state shift, the groups that use and support these resources have changed accordingly. With reductions in funding the new normal, it is imperative that the agencies that manage trails identify the groups that will support those efforts and find ways to support those groups. A good example in my area is Friends of Capitol Forest. They work with all user maintain existing trails and are actively working with local land managers (Washington DNR) to enhance the user experience for all appropriate recreation activities. Groups like these should be recognized for the thousands of hours they invest in a public resource.

Chris Marsh
thehouseofccccc@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/05/26 at 11:20 am

I believe if they put there efforts into maintaining the trails and roads out there will be no reason to build new ones. Instead of closing a damaged trail and build a new one. Get them all repaired and then build new ones. Use the KISS method to fix them. Loggers have been building and maintaining roads cheaply for years. Using trees to build bridges, existing gravel pits to rebuild roads, get rid of the environmental bureaucracy. Open all public and private forest land up to everyone and better policing of the bad people and we all can get along and enjoy the outdoors.

Gail Garman, Salmon Ridge Coordinator for the Nooksack Nordic Ski Club
evobunny@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/05/26 at 10:29 am

As someone who has worked hard to maintain the Salmon Ridge Trail System in northwest Washington for the last 14 years, I feel the highest priority should be to provide funding for trail maintenance over trail development. However, development of new trails in areas for user groups that are under served should also be considered as a high priority if there is a clear long term commitment that has been made for them to be maintained by the user groups, and if providing the new trail does not adversely affect the area or other users in that area. Without the maintenance commitment, it makes no sense to pursue new trail development.

Gail Garman,
Salmon Ridge Coordinator for
Nooksack Nordic Ski Club

Wayne
wfmohler@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/05/26 at 10:25 am

Priority should be to take care of what you presently have.

Cheryl Conklin
cherylconk@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/26 at 9:34 am

Everyone loves the glamour and publicity of opening a new trail. However, trails are useless and sometimes dangerous if they're not maintained; that has to be the top priority, especially with the seasonal beating that the trails of the PNW receive.

William Casperson
willcasp@outlook.com
Submitted on 2013/05/26 at 9:15 am

NOVA funds should only be used to maintain resources used for motorized activities, as that is where the funds come from. In the case of nonmotorized activities, the funds should only be used to maintain access to the activities, as that is where the non highway fuel is used.

Jason Ridlon
jhridlon@fairpoint.net
Submitted on 2013/05/26 at 7:10 am

The balance to these priorities should swing toward maintaining existing trail systems. Washington has a number of backlogged trail maintenance issues that affect the safety and quality of the trail user's experience. New trail systems should only be built when there is a clear funding mechanism to support the new trail system.

kevin ashe
d.iga@frontier.com
Submitted on 2013/05/26 at 6:41 am

Right now there can be no 'balance' to the trail situation. I believe all efforts and resources have to be applied to the existing trails. If not, we will lose them. Why divert monies to new trails when we can't adequately take care of the old ones? This should be our priority: keep the existing trails healthy THEN as new funding arises we can branch out creating new trails. But let me say once again, we need to focus on roads too. Without roads we will not need trails due to access. There is a push right now to close 75% of roads in the Mt. Baker / Snoqualmie Forest. 75%!!! Most people will quit using the trails if this happens. Thank you

Catherine (Cathie) Christie
Cathie.Christie@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/26 at 1:47 am

Appropriate PARTNERING with the trails user groups is one hands on approach to fix trails & 'getter done.

I've only recently returned to using our local state & national trail systems again since 2010, but In my youth & raising my daughter we used to walk, hike, bike & camp all over outside of the obvious weekender campsites.

Now, at my current retirement age, my most effective mode of access & enjoyment to the peace & quiet of our 'for public' held lands has been to travel by horseback – my Appaloosa gelding & I have now traveled hundreds of miles of trails together in WA, ID, MT, WY, CO & this year OR too. I have friends well into their 80's still successfully riding these backcountry trails, the locations of the dreams in our youth.

I became a member of several trail riding organizations (BCH, JWPWR & ApHC) to access their knowledge of our current trail systems as well as to contribute to the seasonal repair & upkeep of those trails.

For example, part of the mission of the Back Country Horsemen is their annual commitment of thousands of volunteer man hours & the use of their equipment, horses & pack animals to clear & repair & create new trails for the benefit of walkers, hikers & bicycle rides as well as recreational horsemen on nonmotorized trails.

The BCH also add their fundraiser dollars \$\$\$ to available grant \$\$\$ monies to & thru the governing agencies entrusted with the care & maintenance of our public lands.

The BCH continually look for ways to partner with those governing agencies to get more of the needed jobs done quickly & environmentally compatible each year.

There is so much more the BCH would/could do if there weren't so many strings, (issues & egos?) seemingly locked into the governmental processes.

There are also riders in other clubs & organizations who would gladly partner, volunteer time & resources with you to ensure the continued horse riding access if you would but provide a sensible path through the red tape so we could all just move from endless planning to actually repairing or creating new trails.

I believe partnering with all & within the user groups with those individuals willing to work, not just show up & play, is a strong solution for you. You may contact me anytime & Hope to see you on the trails too!

Sincerely,
Catherine Christie
REALTOR
Women's Army Corp Vietnam Era Veteran
Member since 2011 of:
Back Country Horsemen of America & WA
Appaloosa Horse Club
John Wayne Pioneer Wagons & Riders
Cathie.Christie@gmsil.commailto:Cathie.Christie@gmsil.com ;
CathieChristie@Windermere.commailto:CathieChristie@Windermere.com ;

Al Pelletier
sekiusweep@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/25 at 10:31 pm

People will "vote with their feet." The trails of all types that get the most use will need, and get, the most funding for maintenance. There needs to be a way to promote volunteer trail maintenance on less used routes.

To construct new trails, things like B&O tax credits to private landowners (corporate) or property tax credits to individuals. Can generate capital and encourage access. 501C nonprofits can raise tax-exempt capital to donate to the state or private route owners. The boost to local economies that results from trail use will be the impetus to businesses to contribute. Also trail users will be encouraged to voluntarily contribute to what they want for trails. This solution won't please everyone, but it should come close.

KJ
kjrjatprairierim@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/05/25 at 9:44 pm

I believe increasing user fees is a fair way of sharing the opportunity to use, develop, and maintain trails. Agencies may need to sponsor specific work parties to attract volunteers to help with the development and maintenance of trails. As an incentive for persons to actively participate several times, they should be given some compensation such as a discount on the user fee or as WDNR gives a free pass for logging 24 hrs. of volunteer service.

Dave Hiatt
dhiatt07@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/05/25 at 8:57 pm

The solutions are available if the legislators in Olympia will support the State Constitution as they have sworn to do. Gas taxes for fuel use on other than State funded roads and highways is to be refunded to users per the WA State Constitution.

NOVA (Nonhighway Off-Road Vehicle Activities) was created in the early seventies as an aggregation of the refund eligible money from ONLY the Off-road Vehicle (4WD, ATV & Dirt Bike) users. The 1972-73 ATV fuel use study estimated 4.6% of the state fuel tax to be produced by ALL nonhighway vehicle use, e.g. ORVs + cars driving to hiking trailheads + scenic driving on NHRs + hunting + berry picking, etc. The ORV users gave up their State Constitutional right to an individual refund of their personal nonhighway & off-road gas tax refund moneys in exchange for this legislation that was to benefit only them via their 1% of the overall 4.6%.

Unconstitutional legislative action has subsequently arbitrarily capped the 1% at significantly less than 1% of the gas tax. Other legislative actions at the behest of anti-access, anti-motorized, anti-shared use, paid lobbyists and biased IAC (now RCO) staff stole a large percentage of the NOVA funds for nonmotorized use. See my prior post for details.

The solution is to have the RCO support returning a full 1% to benefit (see JLARC report) its rightful owners, the ORV users. The RCO should then work with the nonmotorized users to obtain their own funding from the remaining 3.6% instead of stealing from the ORV users.

We should also end the DNR's skim of approximately 36% of the NOVA funds right off the top as they have continually reduced or eliminated ORV use on DNR lands and should no longer have these funds.

A true 1% for only the real NOVA ORV trail users and proper allocation of the other 3.6% for nonmotorized trail users will provide adequate funding if the appropriate users are allowed to select where those funds are utilized, i.e. user control, NOT RCO control.

Paul Yelk
paulp575@dog-walker.us
71.32.219.191
Submitted on 2013/05/25 at 7:53 pm

Getting corporate alliances to assist with funding. In return, they could promote their alliance with a small sign and logo.

ROUND 3 FINDINGS

Round 3 Question

Thanks for telling us your priorities in the previous rounds of discussion. This time let's get specific. Please list 2-5 of the most important issues relating to trails you see as emerging in the next five years (and only for the next five years). Think broadly—consider all kinds of trails (land, water, rural, urban, motorized, nonmotorized, etc.). In other words, if you were in charge, what is the short list of emerging issues you would pay attention to that could be realistically addressed (or at least started) in the next five years?

Summary Observations by the Blog Facilitator

In this round of discussion, 41 people commented, providing 42 comments. Below is a summary of the themes of the comments, followed by a *verbatim* reporting of all comments.

Cooperation Issues

While acknowledging a sense of competition between user groups, Town Hall contributors wished to re-frame that controversy. As one contributor put it, “Teach tolerance between ALL trail users. Tolerate don't discriminate.” Some contributors pointed out the potential loss if there is a lack of cooperation, “There are a lot of roads and bridges that need to be fixed, and state park employees that need to be paid, so if you want to argue about it, trail users all lose.” There is optimism in the user community that improved relations are possible, “Multi-use with minimal conflict is possible, Washington needs to learn how to do it. I live in a town that has developed a 4 user group multi-use ethic. Motorcycles, Mountain Bikes, Hikers, and Horsemen all share at least some of the trails, with restrictions to one or more of the groups where it makes sense.”

Additionally, there were calls for the users, themselves, to work on solutions instead of appealing to the government: “Trail opposition needs to be met head on – nimbys [not-in-my-back-yard], conflicting user groups, and “entitled” users. WE need to start working together better.” “With respect to both trail maintenance and use, perhaps it is time that Washington State combined up the various ad hoc efforts of user groups to sit at the round table together into a trails leadership council. By this we would spend less time finding fault with each other and more time finding solutions to state, regional, and local issues.”

Specific Issues Identified in this Category:

- Lack of a user-group forum for enabling cooperation (e.g., a ‘leadership council’ as proposed by one commenter)
- Lack of user-group collaborations (e.g., maintenance work parties) on the same trail system
- Perceptions of unfair treatment as a user group that has been singled out as unpopular (e.g., motorized users) or as an ignored user group (e.g., mountain bikers) or as a heritage user-group that is being displaced by incompatible uses on a trail (e.g., equestrians and hikers by mountain bikers and motorized users)
- Shortage of education programs

- Pervasive attitude among users of an ‘us-versus-them’ competitive decision-making environment instead of an ‘us-against-the-problem’ collaborative environment
- ORV community frustration over allocations of NOVA funds
- Lack of understanding of the distribution and volume of trail use by the different user groups

Trail Program Capacity and Administration Issues

It is not just problems that need management planning. Sometimes success creates a new management need. One commenter said, “Make sure you plan for success as well as diminish opportunities for conflict. If you build a good multi-use area, sign it and encourage good behavior, establish a local council made up of various users, you will get your maintenance taken care of by appreciative user maintenance organizations, similar to the folks who maintain the Pacific Northwest Scenic Trail. Let’s leave a legacy of cooperation, not conflict and exclusion.” The issue of accommodating underserved users was mentioned, “Accessibility for multi-generational users, – children to elders.”

Specific Issues Identified in this Category:

- Funding allocations do not match the contemporary user-demand profile
- Funding, in total, is insufficient
- Users do not have enough control of expenditures
- Different user sectors are asked to carry a disproportionate amount of the tax and fee burden
- Lack of water trails in the state (e.g., water walks, paddles, boating)
- Lack of land trails associated with water
- The need for an inventory of trail use by category of users
- Zoning of use versus multiple use
- Multiple fee and permit requirements across the various government sectors

Access Issues

Considerable concern was expressed by contributors about limited access. There were repeated references to the lack of opportunity within a ‘reasonable’ commute from major population centers, especially for motorized recreation. Other Town Hall contributors expressed concerns about backcountry road closures on both public and private lands. Often, these stakeholders noted that road openings would create a quick and easy increase in opportunity, and that this increased recreation opportunity would ease congestion and multiple-use conflicts by spreading the current use across more land. At the same time, other respondents pointed out that increasing recreation areas through road openings is not free; it carries an increased management and enforcement responsibility and also increases liability concerns since opening a road implies that a landowner has met appropriate public safety standards.

Specific Issues Identified in this Category:

- Limited facilities near major population centers (e.g., comments about long commute times to recreation sites, especially for motorized recreationists)
- Rogue (unauthorized) trail construction and use
- Closure of private lands to public recreation
- Closure of public lands to public recreation
- Insufficient connection of trails to communities
- Incorporating trails into the transportation system
- Lack of trail-to-trail connectivity
- Trails not being integrated into the transportation systems
- Trail closures
- Road closures (e.g., logging roads suitable for motorized recreation)
- Access road deficiencies
- Access for under-served communities, especially children and youth, and underserved geographies
- Education

Trail Maintenance Issues

Some Town Hall contributors expressed frustration that, despite wanting to assist government managers, there are impediments that arise from the high standards that are applied to trails. For some, the problem is about getting access to resources from the RCO, “My complaint is the lengthy process and procedure to apply for NOVA grants. No longer can I do it myself, I must hire a consultant for the process.” Others cautioned that volunteers are not a complete solution, “Volunteer trail maintenance done to excess... When a trail is ‘brushed’ to six-foot width when three feet is sufficient, we lose a lot of the most interesting plants which are the very reason I am on the trail...”

Specific Issues Identified in this Category:

- Backlog of maintenance
- Increasing intensity of use adding onto the existing maintenance need
- Use of volunteers (some people say use more, others say be careful because of concerns about the quality of work and liability)
- Construction standards and permitting requirements are too onerous
- Wheel damage to trails
- Feet (human) and damage to trails
- Invasive species
- Use of herbicides
- Horse hoof damage to trails

Multiple Use Issues

A large number of comments were received about single- versus multiple-use on the same trail.

Specific Issues Identified in this Category:

- Multiple use is possible (even desirable).
 - As one commenter put it, in his area “Motorcycles, Mountain Bikes, Hikers, and Horsemen all share at least some of the trails, with restrictions to one or more of the groups where it makes sense.” And he expressed that multiple use carries with it a desirable impact, “I know if our mindset is about enjoying the outdoor experience rather than denying access to public lands (i.e., the recent closure of a campsite in the N Cascades because a bear had a meal at a garbage can) the state can actually help its residents get outdoors...a theme we need to encourage.”
 - Other commenters cautioned against negatively stereotyping user groups as it is inaccurate and unhelpful, “Keep in mind that the majority of users are not causing the problems but it only takes one in a thousand to reflect adversely to the rest of them.”
 - And some commenters observed that separated use can make the evolution of cooperation more difficult, “Segregated use not only concentrate[s] use in certain areas, but it also tends to create a false sense of ownership/entitlement within user groups, breeds intolerance, and results in various interests digging their heels deep in order to protect what is perceived to be ‘theirs’. This in turn will make cooperation and collaboration amongst various user groups even harder.”
- Respect.
 - Two recurring complaints among users in a multiple-use setting were user groups not cleaning up after themselves (most frequently feces from animals being left on the trail for the next user to avoid) and damage that wheeled vehicles cause to trails (most frequently trail rutting and breakdowns caused by tire tracking and speed turning on trail bends).
 - Another concern is that the inherent dynamics of one mode of recreation conflicts with the dynamics of another mode (e.g., mountain bikers and horse riders): “This is not a matter of one group being better than another but rather capacity or traffic management when the use of a trail system by fast moving users becomes heavy enough that there is a significant safety factor that drives other users away.” There were frequent calls by respondents for users to respect the needs of users that come after them or that they meet on a trail.
- Advocacy is more important. In the face of these concerns, contributors noted that multiple use could mean the ability to create a coalition of support for trails. The logic was that more citizens using trails can mean a stronger voice for this recreation in state policy.
- Acknowledge that there are incompatible uses. Safety concerns arise when recreationists who value speed on the trail and recreationists that need no surprises use the same trail. For example, an equestrian said, “My concern is bikes and horses on the same trails. The bike riders go as FAST as they can. When they come around those corners at that speed and come up on a horse.....”

Safety, Security, and Quality of the Experience Issues

Town Hall contributors were concerned about safety issues, usually in regards to the multiple-use issues discussed above. Some recreation modes value speed and these can easily come into conflict with other modes, like horse-back riding, where the rapid appearance of a mountain bike, motorcycle, quad, etc., can startle the horse and thereby create a safety risk. A number of respondents mentioned trailhead parking lots as not secure thereby creating a risk for vehicle break-ins and theft. Additionally, different users have different tolerance levels for noise in their recreation environment; indeed, some seek out trails as a way to escape their noisy day-to-day living environment to find peace and quiet, while others seek out remote recreation on trails because it is a venue where using noisy equipment is more acceptable than in their normal, day-to-day living environment.

Specific Issues Identified in this Category:

- Safety
 - Parking lot security
 - Enforcement
 - ‘Traffic’ management on the same trail by users with inherently different modes of trail use
 - Parking lot and trailhead deficiencies (e.g., lack of toilets, vehicle break-ins, inadequate signs)
 - The need for bicycling trails, especially in urban areas, that are safe and efficient
 - Adding ‘trails’ extensions (lanes) to vehicle-oriented bridges
 - Domestic animal (dogs and horses primarily) feces on trails.
 - Noise on the trails – acceptable or not?
-

Verbatim Comments from the Town Hall Web site in Response to Round 3

John Pope, Anacortes, WA
 popejp@comcast.net
 Submitted on 2013/06/21 at 8:18 am

1. Multi-use with minimal conflict is possible; Washington needs to learn how to do it. I live in a town that has developed a 4 user group multi-use ethic. Motorcycles, Mountain Bikes, Hikers, and Horsemen all share at least some of the trails, with restrictions to one or more of the groups where it makes sense. Alaska and BC both share better than we do. Let's show that we can do it by opening up more trails like the Carlton area ORV system...it does work!
2. Make sure you plan for success as well as diminish opportunities for conflict. If you build a good multi-use area, sign it and encourage good behavior, establish a local council made up of various users, you will get your maintenance taken care of by appreciative user maintenance organizations, similar to the folks who maintain the Pacific Northwest Scenic Trail. Let's leave a legacy of cooperation, not conflict and exclusion.
3. Water on trails makes users blame each other. BCO, IMBA and other groups know how to design a dry trail. Dry trails reduce irritation between groups over who is at fault.
4. I have travelled by bike, horse, foot, motorcycle and jeep over many of our trails. I know if our mindset is about enjoying the outdoor experience rather than denying access to public lands (i.e., the recent closure of a campsite in the N Cascades because a bear had a meal at a garbage can) the state can actually help its residents get outdoors...a theme we need to encourage. We really have been guilty of denying access to our public and the result is an obese population that is turning its back on the backcountry experience.

William
 reson46@gmail.com
 Submitted on 2013/06/20 at 2:56 pm

1. Additional motorized trails.
2. Motorized trails near the population centers that use them. (Hint – there are no OHV areas within King County)
3. Funding theft – restore the funds collected from OHV users to use on OHV trails. Stop stealing to pay for nonmotorized trails.

Forest Shomer
 inspass@whidbey.net
 Submitted on 2013/06/17 at 11:31 pm

I use surfaced trails as a bicyclist and nonmotorized 'soft' trails as a walker and hiker. The issues or concerns I will list seem to be heightening a little with each passing year

On surfaced trails: two concerns.

- (1) Dogs, whose owners don't clean up after them; and unleashed dogs going after moving bicycles. I have been bitten in that very situation. It's pretty dangerous as a rider to be fending off a charging dog.
- (2) Increasing use of herbicides. This becomes repetitive, annual or more, since killing off the vegetation only results in new vegetation, usually weedier, replacing what was killed. It makes it unsafe to pick berries along the trail, which is something that many of us like to do each summer.

On soft trails, three items.

- (1) Backcountry trailheads are less and less secure. There is theft and break-ins. Discourages people from leaving a car for any length of time, even for just a few hours. There needs to be a way to deter theft, maybe by video cam.
- (2) Damage to trail surfaces by wheels. The main damage I am seeing has been done by mountain-bike wheels churning through wet places. It's much more difficult and expensive to repair a remote trail, so I would ask my mountain bike-riding friends to dismount and walk past wet areas in order to preserve trails for all users.
- (3) Volunteer trail maintenance done to excess. We have the tools to quickly do a fair amount of damage to the trailside flora. When a trail is 'brushed' to six-foot width when three feet is sufficient, we lose a lot of the most interesting plants which are the very reason I am on the trail: to study plants and do photography. By early summer I

often find that the uniquely interesting plants along the trail have been thoroughly shredded for the purpose of making the trail more open for convenience of one user group (e.g., mountain bikers) to the detriment of other users who just need a traditional single-path narrow trail lined with native wildflowers, berries, etc. This issue could be addressed by educating volunteers to recognize diversity, know what is native, and use more restraint in clearing the path.

Jeff Selby, PTC Vice President for Jefferson County
SelbyJL44@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/19
Submitted by email, posted by the moderator

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the RCO's request for comments on the future of Washington State trails. I wish to address a specific area of concern here in Jefferson County. It is the Jefferson Trails Coalition's desire to work with the RCO on our proposed routing of the Olympic Discovery Trail (ODT) through Anderson Lake State Park (ALSP) and further south on the Quimper Peninsula toward Discovery Bay and on to the connection with the ODT in Clallam County. We see this as the natural extension of the Larry Scott Memorial Trail (LSMT) in Jefferson County.

The Jefferson Trails Coalition (JTC) is the Jefferson County "chapter" of the Peninsula Trails Coalition (PTC), a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation registered in Washington State, whose vision it has been for the past 25 years to establish a nonmotorized transportation and recreation corridor across the northern lowlands of the Olympic Peninsula from Port Townsend to La Push on the Pacific Ocean. Here in Jefferson County the LSMT is considered to be the eastern end of the ODT. Over the past two decades, the LSMT has grown from an idea to now extend 7.3 miles from the boatyard in Port Townsend, south on the Quimper Peninsula to the Milo-Curry Road intersection with S. Discovery Rd., near the Four Corners intersection on Highway 20. The section of the ODT from Port Townsend to ALSP and possibly on to Discovery Bay is also considered to be coincident with the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNNST). The PNNST stretches from Glacier National Park in Montana, across northern Idaho and Washington, and crossing Puget Sound from Whidbey Island into Port Townsend via the Coopville-to-PT State ferry route. The PNNST was designated as part of the National Scenic Trail network by President Obama just two years ago as part of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. That was the first such designation in the previous 25 years. We are proud to be associated with the Pacific NW Trail Association and have been working closely with that organization for the past four years.

After years of investigating various alternative routes beyond the Four Corners area, the JTC has concluded that a route that involves ALSP would be the most beneficial route to the promotion of the ODT, the PNNST, the ALSP itself, and the Tri-Area community of Chimacum, Port Hadlock, and Irondale. In addition, when the Tollefson Trail is completed, linking Hadlock and Chumacum, another route accessing the ALSP from State Highway 19 may be possible. Having this recreational resource in this region will have a lasting economic benefit for the local community and indeed the entire Olympic Peninsula as well. Nationally, it has been well documented that a resource of this nature in other parts of the country accounts for literally millions of dollars in economic support. The State Parks System would certainly be a beneficiary of that support. The Olympic Peninsula Visitors Bureau has recognized that in addition to creating an attractive transportation and recreational corridor locally, it will attract many visitors from outside the area, adding to the economic vitality of the entire region. As a result, they allowed the PTC to enhance our website with a grant of \$25,000.

Continuing south from the Anderson Lake Park entrance road, we would like to see it pass through the ALSP land on the south side of the road, through Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) land and continue its route toward Eaglemount Rd. From there it would continue through DNR and private land toward the intersection of State Highway 20 and US Highway 101 at the southern tip of Discovery Bay. These possible routes have been thoroughly scouted by the PTC/JTC.

A great deal of effort has been expended by the PTC working with the Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the North Olympic Salmon Coalition (NOSC), the Washington State Dept. of Transportation (WADOT) and a private water company at the tip of Discovery Bay to coordinate the design of the ODT around the tip of the Bay with the shoreline restoration project in which the WDFW is currently engaged. The PTC last year raised \$45,000 in a special fundraising effort to support the inclusion of the ODT in this design. These were all private donations from within the local area, a testimony to the great interest and dedication of the support of the trail concept by the local community.

To the north of the Park, the route will need cooperation from both private and public land owners and easement holders. The JTC has presented our desires for a trail corridor to the Jefferson PUD, which has recently acquired the electric grid infrastructure from PSE, including the easement for some of the distance of the proposed route between Four Corners Rd. and the ALSP.

These are the desires of the Jefferson Trails Coalition, the PTC, the PNTA, and many local individuals regarding this particular section of the ODT. Further information about the Peninsula Trails Coalition organization, our mission and

goals, and examples of our progress on various projects along the entire route of the ODT, can be accessed on our website, www.OlympicDiscoveryTrail.com. Our desire is to promote a trail design that is of consistent parameters over the entire breadth of the Peninsula. Specifically, the trail design page on our website, http://www.olympicdiscoverytrail.com/about_us/trail_design.html, will indicate the characteristics and design of the trail as it would approach and pass through ALSP. However, we see this as a staged, on-going approach, with no expectations that it will reach the final design configuration upon initial construction, or frankly at any time in the near future.

Lori Flemm
loriflemm@live.com
Submitted on 2013/06/17 at 11:11 pm

1. Need funds to acquire rail trails when abandoned. Need funds to acquire trail corridors/easements and build for children to get to school on foot or bicycle, which can also be used for recreational use.
2. Light existing trails used by commuter bicyclists and pedestrians.
3. Dog owners need to clean up pet waste; in the future plastic bags may be banned or not provided due to budget cuts.
4. IT is easier to build a road over a creek or lake than a trail. Permitting agencies need to acknowledge nonmotorized trails as a legitimate use and not make it so difficult.
5. Trail opposition needs to be met head on – nimbys, conflicting user groups, and “entitled” users. WE need to start working together better.

Larry Beardslee
larry__beardslee@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/17 at 11:16 am

Leaving Republic we have a 5 mile multi-use trail. Two miles are paved. All of the multitude of users get along without complaint (an occasional youth will speed on a quad, but he is soon met by police).

My complaint is the lengthy process and procedure to apply for NOVA grants. No longer can I do it myself, I must hire a consultant for the process. Twenty five years ago when I got the first of many NOVA grants, it was not near as complex. Rural areas are expected to have trails, but we do not have DNR or USFS staffing.

Don Larson
larson_don@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/17 at 9:24 am

The biggest issue we face today and going forward for 5 years is intolerance, it's painfully clear after reading so many of these comments.

If forest managers continue to employ discriminate practices in their travel management, entire cultures will suffer, local economies and tourism markets will suffer, user conflict will only escalate and eventually law abiding people will become criminals just so they can recreate.

As a 46 year old native of this state who's children are 4th generation off-road motorcyclists, I can answer the question asked above – “Can we really believe that there aren't enough places to drive machines?” Answer: Yes, believe it and by all means do your own fact checking but there is not one, (1), ORV park in King County. While the sport grows, all the state and forest managers have done is close more and more and more areas down to motorized use.

A statement like motorcyclists don't “need” to be in the backcountry can easily be turned to say that no one “needs” to be in the backcountry and that hikers can just as easily enjoy the closed forest roads as much as any other user. Off-road motorcyclists continue to spend hundreds of dollars on aftermarket exhaust systems that provide quieter performance, specialized and costly “trials” tires that do not dig up the trail surface and off-road motorcycle clubs continue, as they have for years, to perform thousands of hours each year on trail maintenance.

The next 5 years need to include –

1. A true understanding and awareness amongst all users and managers that there are many LEGITIMATE ways of recreating and just because one or more groups does not care for the other, no single user group or organization should have influence over land managers convincing them that it would be in anyone's best interest to lockout other users whether they be motorized, MTB, equestrian, hikers, trail runners, dog walkers, etc.....

2. More access! Quit closing trails and forests!
3. Legislation that abolishes the state's, (or any land owner's) liability or responsibility for accidents and injuries that occur during the act of recreation. We are all free thinking humans and the activities we participate in can be dangerous but we still willingly participate.
4. No more red tape and environmental paralysis when trying to create new opportunities and areas for recreation. Common sense needs to prevail and it does not include the same standards and requirements to build a trail as it does to build an REI with a 100k sq. ft. parking lot and wetland marsh outback.
5. With the intent of sounding redundant more access, tolerance of non-hiking user groups and no more closures!

Sue Wheeler
sjwheeler65@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/17 at 8:50 am

One of the big things for me is closing timberland and gating access to trails. The big timber companies are going to start charging and it affects access to the outdoors. I walk on logging roads for exercise and might not have anyplace to walk. At Mt. St. Helens, my favorite trailheads are already locked behind private timber company gates. I think the discovery pass and all the other passes are confusing. You never know what you need where and have to keep moving passes around. I work in tourism and all these land closures and passes and requirements are hurting my business. Hikers can't get to trails, hunters can't use land, and anglers aren't allowed access to the river. We need to do something now or our lifestyle will be ruined.

Kathryn Longfellow
klongfellow@frontier.com
Submitted on 2013/06/16 at 9:11 pm

There are several areas that I think are important to address:

1. Accessibility for multi-generational users, – children to elders
2. Maintenance of trails and trailheads as well as roads leading to the trailheads. The access roads need to address vehicles having a lower wheel clearance.
3. Separation of motorized use areas from nonmotorized use areas
4. Safe bicycle routes away from motorized vehicle use
5. Trailheads that are fairly easy to locate – better signage and maps

janet welch
aloha@olympus.net
Submitted on 2013/06/16 at 6:59 pm

All users need to recognize that their use causes impacts to the trails, to varying degrees. A bicycle on a relatively flat trail might not cause much damage, but on a steep trail the impact increases disproportionately. The same is true for horse or motorized vehicles, but to a greater degree. Walkers create impact in that they often outnumber the others, at least on the trails I frequent.

But in all cases, these users need to pay back for their use. Where there is erosion happening that can be easily remedied, sometimes just routing water from flowing down the trail, they need to just DO IT. We can't expect someone else to clean up after us, or to do minor maintenance that can avoid major maintenance needs in the future.

And if funding is short, the less impactful uses should receive priority in order to provide the most recreation for the highest number of people.

And, lets not forget that closed roads can be used by ORVs...they don't need to rip through the backcountry when the ride is the focus rather than the things that slower travelers enjoy.

My bias is toward preserving the motorless opportunities—can we really believe that there aren't enough places to drive machines?

Steve Means
big_slacker@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/16 at 10:01 am

We really need more MTB and multi use trails. All you need to do is look at how people 'get along' on urban multi use trails in Bellevue for instance, or the massive success and volunteer maintenance on Duthie Hill in Issaquah.

Jeff Chapman
bbbramch@olympus.net
Submitted on 2013/06/13 at 11:42 pm

We saddle and pack stock users are concerned with the inability by our land management agencies to keep up with trail maintenance, particularly with the loss of a credible agency work force on the land. While it is true that volunteers can perform some of the work, there are many catches to even willing volunteers being able to volunteer. The expectation is that the agencies are still charged with nothing going wrong and everything being iron clad perfect in the sense that work efforts and results do not infringe on anyone's and everyone's interpretations of regulations. Nothing is addressed promptly anymore, not even fighting wildfires. Some of our users have tried to treat invasive species only to be told they were disturbing natural and cultural resources. When it comes to backcountry trails, the winters bring blowdowns and slides, the agencies evaluate this through the summer, and if lucky the trails are fixed by late fall.....just in time for another winter.

The nature of volunteerism too is that citizen participants often feel rewarded by the work that most benefits their form of recreation. This means there is in some cases a shift in what gets done based on the interests of the workers rather than the agency objectives. A horseback rider needs vertical clearance. A wheelchair user needs horizontal clearance. Switchbacks become narrow. Bridges become footlogs. Logs across trails and weak bridges are blockades to horse use but not to hikers or bikers. All in all there is a downgrading of trail function. If trails don't meet a multi-user standard, then friction develops between user groups. This results in efforts to segregate users or simply close trails to certain users. Responsible users do not want nondurable trails. We have nondurable trails because we can't keep up. But the agencies do have a choice which is to not make fixing trails more of an administrative/policy investment than an on-the-ground one.

Another issue is the need to address expanded populations of certain user types in areas like King County that quickly results in displacement of existing users. This is often related to an expanding mountain biking population that in numbers can be a challenge for other trail users. This is not a matter of one group being better than another but rather capacity or traffic management when the use of a trail system by fast moving users becomes heavy enough that there is a significant safety factor that drives other users away. Just like with traffic management, trail systems in populated areas need to be engineered, signed, and in many cases, expanded. The goal is that every outdoor enthusiast should be able to find a way to safely enjoy her/his form of recreation as long as it isn't careless or destructive.

With respect to both trail maintenance and use, perhaps it is time that Washington State combined up the various ad hoc efforts of user groups to sit at the round table together into a trails leadership council. By this we would spend less time finding fault with each other and more time finding solutions to state, regional, and local issues.

As to the claims about NOVA and ORV tabs, ORV tab funding goes to motorized uses as it should. NOVA does get distributed to motorized and nonmotorized trail users since funding for NOVA comes from gas spent by both motorized and nonmotorized users to get to the trails. When I drive my truck and horse trailer to the trailhead, I am paying into the NOVA fund with the nonhighway gas I am using. Some motorized users say they want their entire share. Well, you are getting your entire share. So instead of quibbling let's work together to make sure we both don't lose our shares. There are a lot of roads and bridges that need to be fixed, and state park employees that need to be paid, so if you want to argue about it, trail users all lose.

ross krump
rossk@q.com
Submitted on 2013/06/13 at 10:02 pm

The lack of off highway vehicle use areas, where the vehicles are challenged, would be my biggest concern. I see the biggest problem with "rogue" trails and illegal motorized traffic on lands is due to the lack of usable off highway trails for 4x4 vehicles. I hate to use a quote from a movie, but "if you build it they will come" really comes to mind. Giving the off-road 4x4 community a place to go out and really challenge themselves and their vehicles will lend itself to keeping vehicles on legal trails. I would like to give the example of the Tillamook forest off-road trail system, there are many trails, hardcore to beginner for ATVs, motorcycles, and 4x4 vehicles, and coming together with timber harvesting. The local economy gains from the use of these areas also. Having a place to go where everyone has fun together and helps to maintain the area has been a pleasant experience.

Herb Gerhardt
hgerhardt@wavecable.com
Submitted on 2013/06/13 at 10:46 am

I would say Education and Enforcement are the top priority. We have too many idiots in the woods that make the users feel uncomfortable and even scarred at times. We all need to help in combating these idiots. Keep in mind that the majority of users are not causing the problems but it only takes one in a thousand to reflect adversely to the rest of them.

We need to provide more safe camping opportunities near our trails.

We need to provide sanctioned areas where people can target shoot safely and not creating conflicts with other users. Yes, target shooting is a recreational activity enjoyed by many and if not done properly can create a problem with other recreational users.

Trail users need to be better educated to stay only on designated trails and not build unauthorized trails which destroy vegetation and animal habitat.

Fabian White
fabianwhite3@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/06/13 at 9:22 am

Please list 2-5 of the most important issues relating to trails you see as emerging in the next five years (and only for the next five years).

1. Determining what trails are actually being used and how much in relation to ALL trails as a percentage. (With the limited finances available, money should go to the top trails being used.)
2. User review of ALL trails sounds in order! Maybe it's time to relax/change user restrictions on some trails? With that said, it only takes a few bad apples from any single user group to spoil the harmony. I have been nearly run over by mountain bikers racing downhill going around blind corners. I have had to dodge piles of horse poop across the trail. And I've had to scrape dog poop out of my boots on more than one occasion.
3. Maintenance of existing access roads, trailheads, and trails is paramount. Volunteerism is great but not a practical way to assure this is done. Money will have to be spent here. Can we shop around and be smart about the best labor to do this? (i.e., minimum wage vs. \$20-30/hr civil employees?, correctional work crews?)
4. Trailhead improvements where possible like vault toilets? Signboards/maps/etc? Or remote solar/battery powered security cameras at high theft/vandalism spots to help deter those activities? (thinking of a high pole, like a DOT traffic camera?) The rangers, sheriffs, etc can't be at all places at once. We need to expand their reach with technologies.

Al Pelletier
sekiusweep@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/12 at 7:22 pm

It is hard to add much to the above comments, and most of them seem well thought out and well stated.

FUNDING is likely the top priority. One idea comes to mind. If WiFi can be available at the entry points, whichever "pass" may be required for that area can be purchased by cell, text, lap top or on-board computers. I recently heard about a Canadian citizen who visited Washington. He thought he'd bought every pass or permit, but still got an \$80 citation for lack of some pass. If the information is posted, people can comply better. An extra "donation" amount could be designated to NOVA, or some local maintenance group.

Entry fees for private land can also be collected this way.

I never expected the cell phone to supersede the sheath knife as the outdoors-person's most indispensable tool, but we live in the modern age.

There are so many miles of graveled roads now, that it shouldn't be necessary to construct any more ORV trails. Just allow access. Horses and quads don't share trails very well. I don't know exactly how to "share the road" for all users. But I hate to divide the state into "horse only" or "Snowmobile only" or "kayak only" areas. This topic might be worthy of a separate chat session!

Dave Hiatt
dhiatt07@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/11 at 11:34 pm

The one thing the RCO should do right now is correct the wrongs inflicted on the ORV users and manage the NOVA directly for the sole benefit of the ORV users.

The RCO should work diligently to educate the legislature as necessary to rectify the IAC's prior egregious violation of the trust placed in them by the ORV users.

The second thing the RCO should do is to educate recreational users and the legislature as to the original precepts of the NOVA program and insure that Nonhighway gas taxes from NON-ORV users are properly refunded to fund NON-ORV recreation without stealing Nonhighway Off-Road Vehicle Activities funds from the ORV users as is currently aided and abetted by the RCO.

Third, the users providing the funds must have control of where those funds are spent (NOT RCO staff) once proper funding is restored.

Once in control of their own funds, the users will be able to prioritize projects to effectively and efficiently provide for the needed recreational opportunities. Anything less, e.g. this whole time and money consuming WTTH ephemeral exercise is more comparable to debating how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, than to actually providing any benefit to recreationists.

Nathan
nathanchamilton@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/06/11 at 1:16 pm

Unleash the trail builders. Local equestrians feel besieged by growing numbers of Mountain bikers. Meanwhile, new rules are calling for more red-tape for new trails (engineering reviews). We share well, but would be happier if we were allowed to make more of our own trails.

Scott Smith
emailsucks98@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/06/11 at 12:15 pm

1. Leverage user groups for maintenance of existing trails & construction of new trails. Encourage "Adopt a trail" programs for primary users of those trails.
2. Stop restricting usage on DNR working forests due to "environmental concerns". If it's going to be clear-cut soon, why not people enjoy it while it's here?
3. More new specialized-use trails to spread use out, which in turn reduces user conflicts. For instance; give motors, horses, XC & DH MTB'ers new separate trails, which will reduce use on multi-use / hiking trails.

Sheila B
mrs.budb@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/06/11 at 10:47 am

I agree with all above. There needs to be motorized and nonmotorized trail availability-including parking and access roads maintained. I too am a Back Country Horseman and am disappointed that when an access has a problem, it is often closed-specifically Deep Creek a campground that I love and has not been open for many years now. I believe that trail maintenance is the next biggest issue. With the cuts to funding, more user groups should be trained and allowed to help with trail maintenance and maybe spend the money providing access for everyone. The other issue that concerns me is safety at the camps. Many times vandals seem to take over camps again resulting in closures. Trails are for all who want to use them and treat them as the special places they are, no matter where they are.

Michael S.
miposy2002@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/06/11 at 9:21 am

Hikers are disproportionately powerful. That is a big, big problem. Bikers, ORV folks, and equestrians have just as much right to trail access overall than anybody else. That's not to say that some trails are inappropriate for certain uses, but only to say that the days of only having access if hikers or the Sierra Club deems it OK need to end NOW.

leonard francies
len.francies@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/11 at 12:45 am

Per capita mountain bike citizens have more stewardship time than hiking citizens. The data sources are random yet if you have the spirit of truth seeking I'm confident you will validate the Mountain Cyclists quandary of being lazier than hikers.

The dedicated Mountain Bike community wishes for greater cooperation and discussion within the ever ongoing back room negotiations.

This is not intended to conflict or argue with other groups. The intent is to remind of our right to expect a lifestyle earned place at all levels of the negotiating table.

Mire Levy
mire101@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 11:27 pm

Priority issue that needs to be addressed NOW so that Washington will be better prepared 5, 10 years from now is for the State land manager community to start realizing that segregated use is NOT the solution to the expected increase in outdoor recreation needs caused by projected population growth. In fact, segregated use will be the cause for increase in user conflicts in the future if not corrected soon.

Segregated use not only concentrate use in certain areas, but it also tends to create a false sense of ownership/entitlement within user groups, breeds intolerance, and results in various interests digging their heels deep in order to protect what is perceived to be "theirs". This in turn will make cooperation and collaboration amongst various user groups even harder. Land managers, by intending to limit user conflicts, are actually creating new ones that will become more difficult to undo with each passing year.

We have seen this being played out in the other Washington in the political arena, and this Washington certainly deserves better than this. Create more shared use opportunities so that ALL trail usage can be more widely dispersed. Be the agent to facilitate inter-group collaborations by building a common ground for ALL user groups to care about. We are all in this together, after all.

Kathy
kyoung1735@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 9:55 pm

Within the next five years I would like to see an emphasis on trailhead parking and maintenance of existing trails. I think it will be important to train and encourage larger numbers of volunteers to assist with maintenance, In this time of tightened budgets volunteers can make the difference in keeping our recreation areas open. Make the volunteer opportunities very visible to the various user groups and to new users, and new groups.

Don Larson
larson_don@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 4:10 pm

An equitable share of trails for ALL users is what's needed, now and 5 years from now. As a single track motorcyclist I am way past the "important issue" stage and left dealing with the fact that I must travel 2 to 4 hours round trip to use a trail system that still allows the use of motorized vehicles (for now). I live in rural King county and I am surrounded by county and state funded trail systems that discriminate against anything without a human or horse heartbeat, (i.e., motorized, MTB and dogs) yet there are gun ranges, gravel pits, and highways all around us creating noise and pollution BUT there is no motorized trail access ANYWHERE in King Co.

The important issue going forward for 5 years is the practice of de-commissioning, or shutting down ANY trails!!! The practice of closing and locking gates to keep the public of public land is another issue not only prevalent now but seemingly gaining in popularity with forest managers.... If the current pace of shutting the public out keeps up for the next 5 years, there will be no legal place for anyone to recreate on trails.

To the question that ORV contributes more funding per individual, I would remind other user groups that while ORV users also pay for hauling vehicles, fuel (in the ORV as well), taxes, tabs, D-Pass, Forest Pass, supporting local establishments and economies, etc..... ORV's are also required to purchase and maintain state ORV tabs. When we start seeing the state require stickers on horses, hiking boots and MTB's in order to just set foot or rubber on a trail, things will become equitable...

Like Shrubitup said – “Tolerate, don’t discriminate”

Happy Trails....

Tom Fitzpatrick
t-cfritz2@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 3:57 pm

1. Teach toleration. 2. Look esp. closely at state lands close to population centers so the demand for trails can be addressed in a cost- and energy-efficient manner. 3. Need to keep up-to-date the population data for each user group as one basis for distributing resources in a fair way.

Tarekith
Tarekith@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 2:12 pm

Encourage more inter-group trail maintenance days on shared use trails. Currently it’s only the hiker, or only the bikers, etc that get together to do maintenance on trail days. By encouraging users from different groups to work together, more could be done to foster a more positive attitude that we’re all on this together. We all need less of the “us versus them” attitude that predominates so many trail issues today.

Better maintenance of access roads would be nice as well.

Byron Stuck
nmatrust@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 1:34 pm

I very much like Joe’s comment about a clear and pointed bias against OHV enthusiasts and thus failure to address their needs. My personal view is that the statewide organization of which I’m president likely WAS CREATED because of the failure of the RCO and related governmental agencies to respect and attempt to meet the OHV community’s needs. It’s a personal choice when user groups disagree; it’s a failure of government when that disagreement devalues the needs of one side, creating the external need for advocacy.

And since you’ve given us 2-5 issues, I’d add the availability of OHV trails as a second priority. That includes single track for motorcycles, and wider trails/roads for OHVs with more than two wheels.

Third I’d ask for funding sources (pay-to-play for the various user groups) and clearly would include volunteer hours as part of the payment. Protecting those funding sources is an issue in itself but not even our elected officials and judges have shown that to be possible ...

My fourth and final issue would be to make the funding system integrated across governmental units. It’s not the user’s fault that the state’s trail systems require a Discover Pass for DNR access and a USFS pass for other trails. Oh wait, this was supposed to be achievable within 5 years ... sorry, strike this one!

Bryan P
Commerce@terran.org
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 12:16 pm

1. Not losing any more MTB-use trails to Wilderness designation.
2. Fixing Wilderness designation to allow MTB as a grandfather option or case-by-case with review.
3. More MTB-use trails.
4. Ensuring that National Park hiking-only trails are preserved and maintained, but kept wild and natural.

darcy
djmitchem@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 10:16 am

Emerging issues:

- 1) Closure of private lands to public recreation.

For the last century large timber companies have allowed (and our public laws/tax policy has encouraged) public recreational access to private timberland. Now that is changing, as these lands have gone from “closed to motorized

access” to “closed to all entry without paying”. In the past, rural residence didn’t need trails because they had logging roads to hike or ride horses, bicycles, motorcycles, ATV’s. We have already seen how closing these lands to motorized access is causing a huge push for more motorized areas on public land. Now imagine if walking/horseback/mountain bike were closed on timberland, too. Rural and suburban areas will need to provide replacement trails. Many rural horseback riders do not have trailers, and ride from home through neighboring timberlands. Soon they will need public trails, as motorized does. As private land closes, there will be increased demand for access to public lands and links to public trails. The implications of closing millions of acres of private land is a key emerging issue.

2) Trails that connect regional parks to communities.

Our national/regional parks and monuments want to be connected to nearby communities with trails. Mount Rainier NP is doing this and Mt. St. Helens is looking at possibilities. Regionally connecting trails are the future.

3) Incorporating trails into the transportation system:

Local governments are recognizing that trails can become part of the transportation system. Trails for commuting, safe routes to schools, wellness and fighting obesity, connecting parks with communities—all these issues are related to using and adding trails to communities. As urban/suburban linking trails become more important safety and vandalism (metal thieves, drug activity, prowlers etc) will need to be aggressively combated by partnerships between users and government. Easements, rail road rights-of-way, shoulder of roads, utility corridors: all of these options will need to be looked at for linking trails.

4) New trails being “regulated to death”

New trails may be priced out of existence because of barrier free, paved standards on top of multiple layers of costly environmental scrutiny, and a web of grant requirements. Trails are supposed to have obstacles and be challenging. Today’s standards aren’t trails but narrow roads. Trails near or along water are especially vulnerable to extinction via regulation.

5) Funding system shake-up.

Reading all these posts tells me of an impending battle over NOVA funds between motorized and nonmotorized. Although I hike, and do not ride motorized at all, I see the real angst over this fund—especially after State Parks “poached” the money and they don’t allow motorized. RCO needs a more efficient distribution system. And budget proposals that just ignore the ratings and put the money in areas with the most votes are unethical. The Discover pass is floundering with admin. Taking too much while the same groups pay more and more. User anger is growing at the whole system. I foresee another shake-up in funding.

Heather McCartney
hmccartney@ci.mukilteo.wa.us
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 9:16 am

The Three Key Issues for Trails in the Future are:

1) Access to the water and Puget Sound (waterwalks and paddles)

The State of WA needs to work with BNSF to develop a “Puget Sound Access Initiative” that identifies where access points are and where they are possible in the future with underpasses or bridges over BNSF RR Tracks. BNSF is willing to work on this and having a vision would assist local jurisdictions in completing it over time.

2) Safe & separated bikeways that are connected

Bicycling whether to commute, long-distance or exercise needs to be on safe routes. Having them separated helps to ensure this. Connectivity is key to allow the rider to choose the level of challenge and distance. STP and STV are examples where routes that are safe need to be provided. One hundred mile loops need to be planned.

3) Trail Maintenance and Miss Use of public property. The Forest Service is underfunded for the heavy use that their official campsites and ATV trails. The unofficial use is creating significant problems for rivers and streams and destruction with automatic firearms. Partnerships are needed to increase maintenance and manage usage.

Joe Clark
larsonclark@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 9:13 am

It’s good to have a place for trail users to express their views which hopefully will result in expansion of recreational trails that are equitable for ALL trail users. As a regular volunteer on a trail building/maintaining crew it’s easy to see

the need for additional sustainable trails and less 'bootleg' activities that damage the environment and give a bad name to recreational trail users. Cooperation among all parties is key.

Tootie Crowson
crowson2@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 8:46 am

My concern is bikes and horses on the same trails. The bike riders go as FAST as they can. When they come around those corners at that speed and come up on a horse.....

We also horse camp with BCH, and the roads to the camps need to be repaired and maintained.

Kye iris
kye.iris@dfw.wa.gov
Submitted on 2013/06/10 at 8:30 am

Throughout the state there are many trails that have fallen into disuse, and the neighboring landowners have blocked legal access to the trails. County and State agencies do not have the resources dedicated to pursue reclaiming this public asset. Often re-opening the trail involves extensive legal fees. A funding category dedicated to reclaiming these assets could help the public regain access.

shrubitup
ontopofit@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/09 at 10:26 pm

Teach tolerance between ALL trail users. Tolerate don't discriminate.

Chris Marsh
thehouseofccccc@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/06/09 at 10:10 pm

1. Open all public and private forest lands to everyone.
2. Educate the people. Have a system like Oregon where everyone who ORV's must take a certification class. This includes minors. Educate the nonmotorized users to understand that the lands are for everyone. Though they enjoy their sightseeing by nonmotorized use, it isn't the only way to view the scenic areas. I personally love to have an adventure in a motorized vehicle to get to the area and then do some hiking as well. That doesn't make us bad people to recreate differently. Also educate the people on reporting the vandalism and illegal dumping of garbage and yard debris. That is a main reason that roads get closed because of the costs to clean up the messes of the inconsiderate people. Educate the firearm target shooters to clean up after they are done. These messes that they leave behind are just ridiculous but everyone you talk to will tell you they clean up after themselves. We all can get along and enjoy the great outdoors if we all understand where each other is coming from and respect each others decisions on how to recreate.
3. Law enforcement.....stop the thefts, the breaking of windows, the vandalism, the illegal dumping, and the burning of stolen cars. I know of one sheriff that patrols an area by me and has to cover hundreds of miles. He just has roads closed so that it can be easier to pack the citizens into one area to be monitored. We should be able to monitor each other along with more patrols to make us all safer. The Meth heads that break into our stuff need to be dealt with swiftly and harshly. We the people worked hard to own our nice stuff not to give it to jerks to get high.
4. Stop the bureaucracy.....trail systems can be fixed simply by using the resources that are provided on the land. The loggers do it. Mine the existing gravel pits. Build log bridges. Stop over engineering of simple things. Make people responsible for their own actions. The government does not need to save them from themselves. A higher power will decide that.....not the government. Quit wasting money on studies that uses all the money that was intended to do the project. That to me is the most ridiculous part. 500,000 for a person or group of people to tell the government if they can or can't build something. We the people already pay wages for people within the government who are more than qualified to make those decisions. Stop the frivolous lawsuits from out of state or from the so call victims. You knew the risks before you went out. If you know you are injury prone.....stay home.
5. Quit charging for everything. Rouge trails are being built because not only is there no place to go, there are beginners that maybe can't afford to get into an area. So they are place into a position to violate to have fun. Reiter Pit was a great place for everyone (and there was many) until it was downsized and became an elitist park. And if you do need to charge, charge fees to everyone, license the horse, the hiker, the biker.....so along with their discovery pass they have a 40 dollar licensing fee as well. SO MY BIGGEST THING IS TO MAKE IT FAIR ACROSS THE

BOARD!!!! Or give the ones who pay the most fees.....the biggest say on land use and not turn them into the minority or the problem child.

People wonder why other people are always angry is because we are not allowed to recreate in our own fashion. The elitists have turned us into caged animals.....

Jerry
hardinester@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/09 at 10:08 pm

My top two five-year trails priorities are:

1. Improve access for under-served communities, especially children and youth, and underserved geographies.
2. Build capacity for inspiring trail users to develop and practice a "trail ethic." Examples include the excellent Wild Whatcom in Bellingham and the USFS Mountain Stewards program. One goal of such educational programs should be to anticipate and address trail user conflicts.

Crazy Eddie
roberts.noah@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/09 at 8:38 pm

I would like to see a lot more support for urban bike traffic, especially commuter oriented. Our roads lack both in number and quality of bike lanes that in fact don't even support all kinds of pedal transport. Education is getting better and I find that the yelling is reduced, but it's still not particularly safe out there. I know at least one road plan where millions are going to be spent "updating" one of the worse roads in Lacey which crams bikes in a tiny, 3' lane in an area where they'll also be smashing the lane width for cars to a barely possible level.

Plans for future development should place MORE attention to bikes, not less. We need less roundabouts that are perhaps safer for drivers but extremely dangerous for bikes and pedestrians. We should be looking at countries in Europe that are encouraging bike and foot traffic within their cities and reaping the great benefits to the encouraged consumer behavior in the local marketplaces.

I would also like to see better support for MTB trails in our parks, but I believe the issue of urban bike traffic is more important for our future and is quite definitely an immediate issue for the next five years at least.

Linda Roe
lzroe1951@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/06/09 at 6:46 pm

- 1) Road access to trailheads. So many trails have been lost to the public due to deteriorating or undriveable roads. 2) Unsafe conditions on the trails, for hikers and horses, washed out bridges, rockslides etc. These would be my top priorities

Linda McAskill
lmcask1@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/06/09 at 12:25 pm

Maintenance of access roads and adequate parking for nonmotorized use. Equestrians and hikers. Many of the access roads are a landmine of potholes. Such as the Middle Fork Teanaway road into Indian Camp Campground. 5 MPH max. Very hard on vehicles and animals in trailer.

Beth Blay
bbinaz@earthlink.net
Submitted on 2013/06/09 at 11:23 am

Priority issue(s): 1. Maintain existing trails 2. Safety--separate motorized from nonmotorized & do NOT permit earphone use by any user. This limits ability for users to be aware of other users whether hiker, horse, or biker and creates dangerous situations 3. Encourage local business involvement for either sponsorship(s) or actual work. 4. Given the fact that as an equestrian, I maintain 2 horses at no small expense, pay taxes on property to do so & also pay license & tax fees for pick up and horse trailer plus fuel and maintenance for same, I question prior comment that ORV contributes more funding per individual. (I also belong to Back Country Horsemen and contribute toward actual trail work.)

Joseph Wernex
jawernex@fairpoint.net
Submitted on 2013/06/08 at 7:19 pm

The single most important question facing the trails community today is whether off-road vehicle enthusiasts will continue to be subjected to bias, discrimination and often malicious prejudice and hate speech or IF RCO and other government agencies involved with trail based recreation will summon the ethics and courage to ensure that motorized trail recreationists are at long last treated with fairness and equality. A civil rights and equality act for outdoor recreation as it were.

It is unacceptable and blatantly unethical that members of the ORV community, who contribute more funding per individual recreationist than any other trail based group, have access to far fewer trails than those in other groups.

Most if not all of the RTP (Symms Act) money is generated by ORV recreationists, however only a very small portion is actually expended on trails for ORV recreation. WHY ??? In regard to in state trail funding I.e. NOVA funds ORV recreationists are again the highest contributors per individual. Again why?? ORV recreationists use fuel on which tax is collected both when traveling to trailheads on nonhighway roads and while riding their machines on trails.

There are so few single track ORV trails available in WA state that those that do exist are subject to a high of wear due to the extraordinarily high volume of use. By and large maintenance on the few trails that exist is grossly inadequate. Major increases in single track ORV trail is a necessity.

erik bledsoe
mrairikk@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/06/08 at 5:21 pm

The lack of off highway vehicle use areas, where the vehicles are challenged, would be my biggest concern. I see the biggest problem with "rogue" trails and illegal motorized traffic on lands is due to the lack of usable off highway trails for 4x4 vehicles. I hate to use a quote from a movie, but "if you build it they will come" really comes to mind. Giving the off-road 4x4 community a place to go out and really challenge themselves and their vehicles will lend itself to keeping vehicles on legal trails. I would like to give the example of the Tillamook forest off-road trail system, there are many trails, hardcore to beginner for ATVs, motorcycles, and 4x4 vehicles, and coming together with timber harvesting. The local economy gains from the use of these areas also. Having a place to go where everyone has fun together and helps to maintain the area has been a pleasant experience.

ROUND 4 FINDINGS

Round 4 Question

In your conversation so far, you have expressed frustration about the various trails user groups not cooperating. How would you fix this problem?

- What are the things user groups can do to fix this problem on their own without asking government to help?
- What are the things government can do to fix (or help fix) this problem?

Summary Observations by the Blog Facilitator

In this round of discussion, 34 people commented, providing 37 comments. Below is a summary of the themes of the comments, followed by a *verbatim* reporting of all comments.

Aspirations Expressed by Town Hall Contributors

“The government can’t fix this problem until each user respects other users’ rights to the trail.”

“All trail activists need to stick together and unite for trails.”

“I agree with Kathleen. We need to respect the reasons different groups of people want to get outdoors. As others have said, it looks like there’s enough land for a wide variety of trails and experiences. We’re not arguing about ‘elites’ here, it seems to me, but about what it means to share something. We have separate urban spaces for different types of activities –think schools, malls, residential areas, and so on– and yet we still ‘share’ the city–think roads, civic spirit, elections. We can do the same in non-urban areas: share them by agreeing on what activities get separate spaces and which ones are to be used by all.”

“Right now, the users groups are more polarized than they should be due to lack of understanding each other. Facilitating greater understanding between the groups would help the groups understand their common goals rather than keep people focused on half truths and outright falsehoods.”

Things User Groups Can Do On Their Own

Cooperative Projects Build Cooperative Behavior

One Town Hall contributor articulated this general principle: “As to how everyone can get along, I’ll echo what some of the others have said – work together on trail projects.” Several respondents presented the premise that if user groups started working together on projects where they have a shared interest, then cooperation would evolve. A backcountry horseman observed that all users are likely to get more attention from government managers when they cooperate, “The user groups can and should do joint/collaborative projects. When a money issue comes up the agency in question will be much more interested in helping if it sees a

cohesive group of users not just one special interest group.” This same horseman also noted there are some natural alliances where mutual benefit can arise simple because of the different attributes of their sport, “The hikers learned some years ago that to get volunteers to work beyond about 3 miles from the trailhead was very difficult. Now BCHW partners with WTA to pack in their tools, food and camp 6, 8 10 or whatever miles.” A hiker thinks youth mentoring, across user sectors, is one way to achieve a long-term solution, commenting, “...mentoring young hikers/riders on trail etiquette goes a long way to solving the problem.”

Participating in Each Other’s Meetings

Several contributors shared positive benefits that have arisen from the simple act of users attending each other’s meetings to share needs, experiences, and explore shared values. A backcountry horseman from Whatcom County said, “We at BCH of Whatcom County have had the opportunity to talk at the Bikers meetings, we have invited them to meet with us. These meetings help each side to see that we really aren’t so different.” Another commenter said, “I would ask ambassadors from each group (people unafraid of conflict and excellent speaking skills) to go attend the meetings of the other groups...”

Explicit Events to Promote Mutual Understanding and Cooperation

A hiker suggests, “I like the previous idea about a sit-down or picnic with all users getting to know each other to find common ground.”

Create Forums for Bringing Users Together

A user from Mason/Kitsap Counties notes a Department of Natural Resources success in his area that can serve as a model for what can be done:

“Here in our Mason/Kitsap County areas we have what we call a Focus Group which is comprised of all user groups like 4x4, Quads, Motorcycle, mountain bike, horse, hunters, fishermen, hikers and individuals who are concerned about our DNR Managed Lands in our area. We generally meet on the first Thursday of the month except for summer months in open public meetings and our local DNR Recreation Manager discusses the issues at hand which will or do affect our recreational opportunities... When any user has specific access, facilities, trails camping or any other concerns, they can discuss them at an open forum and the USERS present will come up with recommendations to DNR as to how they, the users, want these resolved. The DNR Recreation Manager asks what all the users think about the topic and then calls for a consensus vote as to what actions/rules the users want DNR to take. We have used this process now for around 20 years it works really well and I recommend it for all recreation areas to hash out and resolve conflicts between users.”

According to Town Hall contributors, providing an information clearinghouse would help. In support of the stakeholder ideas about user groups interacting more, several users suggested that an impediment is simply not knowing when and where each other meets nor about how to contact one another. Therefore, some form of a clearinghouse to make that information easily

accessible would help. For example, “Government could also help with having links on sites about recreational lands TO the user groups’ websites so we could have easy access to meetings and contacts for the user groups...”

Education and Enforcement

Several Town Hall contributors believe that there is a need for improved education programs. Respect and best multiple-use practices were the themes most of these respondents identified as appropriate for educational messaging. For example, one contributor expressed, “...the user group umbrella organizations need to prioritize educating their groups on the importance of working together for more access for everyone.” Others pointed out that there are some enforcement tools available but the level of enforcement is insufficient.

Things Government Can Do to Improve Cooperation

Messaging

There were calls for improved messaging and imaging representing trail users as a diverse group. A backcountry horseman put it this way, “There are hikers, bikers, equestrians and others. The photos in their brochures need to show all types so that a user hiker in say the North Cascade Park when looking at the information will see that they might meet a horse on a shared trail.” One user suggests using ‘respect contracts’ wherein users are asked to understand and acknowledge appropriate simultaneous use of the same trail, ...have patrons sign respect contracts (such as pack it in pack it out/No dumping)...”

Broadening Opportunity

Town Hall contributors noted that one cause of increasing user-group conflict is a declining quantity of opportunity. An off-road motorist wants the ‘backcountry’ road system open, “...open all the Public and private forest land to everyone. If you open all the foothill roads back up, you will find that the high country stuff will become less populated because we won’t have to go so far away from home to enjoy our hobby.” A hiker suggests, “Turn roads into multi-use trails instead of a line of tank traps.” She also encourages use of incentive systems to encourage private land owners to open opportunities, “Change the property tax law to strongly encourage timber companies with millions of acres to keep free public access.”

Many respondents referenced their impressions of a maintenance backlog that is affecting supply. One potential solution came from a hiker who recommends changing rules and regulations making it easier to use volunteers, “Change the union-protection laws so volunteers can do essential services.” And she recommends user-group support for dedicated funding coming from dedicated users, “Promote an excise tax on outdoor equipment (similar to successful hunting/fishing model) dedicated to on-the-ground trails/facilities.”

Auditing Agency Performance

Some argued for a way to assess the way providers provide supply across the diversity of user groups, especially in the NOVA program, “Audit the NOVA program and the RCO looking for bias, waste, and inconsistencies. Use best management practices instead of wasteful reviews to put more funds on the ground.”

Separating “Non-Compatible” Uses

For some contributors there are inherent differences in recreation modes that make it difficult or impossible to reconcile into a multiple-use framework. For these stakeholders separating users is an appropriate policy response.

For example, an equestrian commented about safety as a need, “Last year while riding our horses on Mt. Spokane, we had a Mountain biker come off of a switchback and was on top of us before we even heard him... It was scary for us, (and we are not novice riders.) and also for our horses... I have always been for sharing the wonderful resources of our most beautiful State. But after this incident happening, what would solve this issue, to make all parties happy? As Riders it makes one very uneasy that this issue happening again, while enjoying our horse back outing. If that had happened to a Novice Rider, or Riders and green Horses it would have had a terrible ending.... The areas need to be split, or some kind of warning, of the danger, of Bikes and Horses...”

Another contributor sees that value differences means there is a need for separation: “It is apparent that motorized and nonmotorized user groups do not have shared values. Therefore, we can save time by not arguing values. Equestrians, hikers, mountain bikers value quiet, visual enjoyment of natural habitat, and viewing wildlife up close... ORV users are seeking varied motorized experiences in back country areas away from paved roads. These users do not object to loud motor noise and are not bothered by gasoline odors or exhaust fumes. They appear to prefer a faster mode of travel... It is reasonable for these two user groups to have separate access to separate trail systems.”

Another commenter suggests day-rotation to provide reasonable separation while making the same area available to different groups, “For areas that are contested so much maybe a shared use, but on different days, would work.”

Verbatim Comments from the Town Hall Web site in Response to Round 4

Scott Chezick
schezick@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/07/12 at 9:24 pm

I think before any measure of fairness or equity is possible it is time to look at some real data and facts rather than a flawed and biased survey. According to Washington's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), There is a much greater interest in Frisbee golf (which I believe was ranked #17) than there is for ORV usage which was ranked in the 40's if I recall and second to last only behind shooting areas. What I would like to see is some real hard data gleaned from visiting the current available areas during peak usage periods and getting a real count of the number of actual users. I ride Walker Valley and I estimate several hundred users many of which have traveled 1 to 2 hours will use it on a busy Saturday or Sunday. I would bet a paycheck that the busiest Frisbee Golf Park set in the middle of densely populated Seattle doesn't see the same number of users in a month. I don't buy the validity or collection methods of the survey at all.

Travis Redfield
travis.redfield@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/12 at 11:51 am

Sorry if my answer is not completely on topic, I can't help it...

I ride motorcycles on trail but I am also an avid trail runner and these days I probably accumulate more miles on trail running trail than I do riding a motorcycle. That said, I have never felt as a trail runner that I do not have adequate access to trails, but I can not say the same for riding my motorcycle.

I enjoy running technical trails, it's a challenge. I also want to ride technical trails for the same challenge. I would not want to be restricted to running on logging roads so please don't think that a motorcycle rider is going to be happy if you take away their technical trails and give them logging roads to ride.

If you want to reduce conflict with OHVs, then restricting their use is not the answer. By doing so you are simply moving the use from one area and concentrating it in another and that is what I think has brought us here in the first place. If you want to decrease conflict than give the OHVs more areas/trails to reduce contention/conflict. Keep in mind my point earlier; we want to ride the same trails that you like to hike/run/etc.

Stop the finger pointing at OHVs for trail erosion. As far as I am concerned the majority of damage occurs due to over-use, lack of water management (run-off), or trail design. For example, hikers have the least impact but I can easily point you to hiking only trails that have as much damage as an OHV trail due to over-use and run-off. The increase in OHV is a fact. This is, in large part, due to the increase in families that enjoy OHV recreation. However, due to the limited trails available to OHV and concentration of users on these trails is what is leading to erosion and not the OHV user. Increase the trails and decrease the erosion.

Finally, I am tired of the elitist attitude from other users who treat OHV users like they don't belong. We do belong and it's time you get over yourself. There are already enough non-multi-use trails/areas that if you can't get along then don't use multi-use trails.

Greg
newmaniac@ymail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/10 at 4:21 pm

Given that HB 1632 passed, it is important that the State put out clear, easy to access information on appropriate OHV use. The State of Idaho does a great job at this. Here are links to examples of user-friendly information they have produced on OHV use:

<http://www.stayontrails.com/>

http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/Recreation/OHV%20Website/Keep/OHV_Booklet_2013_small.pdf

Washington State can do better! We are better...we require helmets!

Sally

scoop@embarqmail.com

Submitted on 2013/06/30 at 4:47 pm

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on trail management issues in Washington State. My husband and I are members of Backcountry Horsemen of Washington, and despite his disability, we've both put in plenty of time on work parties, some of which was on hiker-only trails. I hike, but he can't.

We think Backcountry Horsemen does a good job of educating members, and taken as a whole, the group does a staggering amount of volunteer trail work. With our expensive horse-hauling rigs and RV's, we pay PLENTY into the NOVA fund, and I'm tired of motorized users claiming that that they are the only contributors. They aren't. ORV clubs need to do a better job of educating their members and reach out to all ORV users to persuade them that if riders don't observe sustainable practices on public land, they will find themselves confined to less and less trail opportunity. Perhaps ORV sellers could help point new owners to responsible use?

Muscle-powered recreation enthusiasts in general avoid areas that see heavy motorized use. The role of government is to keep everybody happy, i.e. reduce conflict in the backcountry. A friend of mine is a retired manager for a large timber company. Just before he retired, he participated in a decision to close ALL of that company's land to ALL users. The reason was that it was easier to exclude everybody than it was to allow nonmotorized use only. He said there was only one thing wrong with ORV's: "They don't come with 80 acres of your own land to tear around on." So Good Luck, public land managers! I appreciate your dilemma.

Adequate funding for enforcement is needed. Nobody should go to the trouble to document bad backcountry behavior (by any user) only to be told that nothing can be done. Maybe there need to be statutory changes. Nobody should be able to sue the state for an accident suffered while recreating on public land.

Anyone who recreates in the backcountry has seen the damage irresponsible use of ORV's can do. They are just not compatible with muscle-powered recreation. The dust alone can be a considerable health hazard to horses and riders. (think Green Mountain trail in the Gifford Pinchot, near Keenes Horsecamp . . . it's open to motorcycles, but nearby wilderness trails are not. Compare and contrast.)

ORV's do need more opportunities, because with the marketing behind them, their use will only increase. Letting them access old logging roads in less-erodable areas might be one solution, or even opening trails to them in areas where timber sales are planned in the near future. Because of their speed, they need lots of miles.

Maybe a front-end sales tax on ORV's dedicated to a trails (and enforcement) program for their exclusive use would help.

For the record, we DO own an ORV, and we do use it daily . . . on our own property.

I agree with the comment I saw about making sure that horse camps are reserved for horse use. That's something government can do. If somebody is camped in a horse camp without a horse, and a horse user shows up, the horse user should be able to "bump," them. Horses have special needs and the camp was built to accommodate them. I've helped build some of them. I also agree with the comment that horse opportunities need a minimum of 12 miles of riding. That keeps my horse busy for around 3 hours at a walk.

What can government do to keep everybody happy? Recognize that putting everyone on the same trails won't work and fund trail recreation accordingly. The legislature needs to quit diverting money from the NOVA fund and stop starving state agencies with a recreation mandate. Washingtonians deserve great outdoor recreational opportunities!

T.Marble

tgmarble@yahoo.com

Submitted on 2013/06/29 at 4:18 am

Well, if we must separate user groups.....separate them with EQUAL amounts of land, with equal amenities. The ONE consistency I've seen in Washington is the denial of use by one (or more) groups to appease another group; this is being done due to urban sprawl and mainly hatred. If equestrians, mountain bikers, OHV users or hikers are going to be denied use of an area (say with-in X miles of nearest large municipality), then they are granted access to another area (with-in X miles of nearest large municipality). If an area is deemed off limits to any one (ore more) user group(s), then in equality, the group(s) being denied access then gain access to another equally sized area.

User funding also needs to be established. ORV users and Snowmobilers "tax" themselves to pay for the trails and maintenance that they use. Why don't other user groups do the same? Pay for trail use by the mile, day, year...whatever.

When an area is closed to certain uses, the users being denied access feel victimized and degraded. That is no way for land use to make people feel.

Remember, hikers can go anywhere that anyone else can; other user groups...can not.

mikef

Submitted on 2013/06/28 at 9:30 am

Comment from Gail Garman; submitted by email, posted by the moderator.

evobunny@comcast.netmailto:evobunny@comcast.net

Trails in the National Forest are considered "multi-use" trails with the ideal that they should be shared by different user groups. However, conflict between user groups can result when the quality of the trail experience is diminished by other types of users. One example of such a conflict can be seen with the cross-country ski trails. Skiers need safe, well groomed, tracked ski trails for an optimal trail experience. However, snowshoers and people with dogs also like to use these trails, and in some places, people with "fat" bikes are also allowed on the ski trails. Snowshoes and dogs damage the surface of the ski trails. "Fat" bikes, often ride in the center of the trail risking collision with skate skiers. So these different user groups have trouble sharing trails. To help resolve this conflict at the Salmon Ridge Trail System, the ski club laid out separate snowshoe trails to satisfy the snowshoers and keep them off the ski trails. It's not a perfect solution however, it takes a lot of education (by the user groups), cooperation and good clear trail signs (by the government) so it is clear which trails are intended to be used by one user group or the other. If possible, it would be nice if there could be an on site person to help guide users to the appropriate trails – either a government person or a volunteer representing a user group.

So in general, if user groups can share a trail without causing conflict, then I think the best solution is for the government to simply posting signs to indicate which user groups are meant to share the trail. User groups can encourage sharing these trails by doing education programs in the community and meeting with other user groups to resolve conflicts.

However, if a user group causes trail destruction or simply is not a good fit with other user groups (e.g., horses and motorized bikes) then, the best solution may be to separate user groups by directing each group to a trail dedicated for their use. This separation of user groups is done at commercial ski areas, which have separate snowshoe trail systems, and dog-friendly trails, but is seldom seen on public trails. If conflicts can not be resolved by getting user groups to cooperatively share a trail, then the best solution would seem to be separating the user groups.

Gail Garman,

Salmon Ridge Coordinator and WRAC member

Shane Donogh

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Submitted on 2013/06/28 at 9:29 am

We have so much land in this great state that everyone should be able to share! 2 wheeled off-road motorcycles have a foot print that is much less than a 4x4, quad, or even a horse. Stop whining about "erosion" and "sediment" caused by motorcycles (ever been in the mountains during a rain storm?). If OHV users stay on designated trails and don't ride them out of season the trails will be sustainable for years with volunteer work (See Teanaway, Taneum and Naches trail systems, been there for years)

I know that not all OHV enthusiasts know how to deal with horses or other user groups they may encounter on the trail, so I think that information at the trailheads and even signs along multi-use trails that instructs people how to properly deal with other user groups is a great idea.

Open 'old' Reiter and the Sultan basin back to single track motorcycles! The only user group that should be locked out of the forests are the tweekers and trash dumpers, and those that don't stay on designated trails (this requires enforcement, which DNR failed to do at Reiter for years, which is why it was ultimately stolen from OHV users). However, locking out OHV users of the areas they have used for years only creates outlaw riders that ride them anyways (see no enforcement) and/or more congestion of other OHV areas AND shared use trails, inherently creating more danger and conflict for non-OHV and OHV users alike. In all my years of riding dirt bikes at Reiter I never once had any negative encounters with other trail users. I HAVE been threatened by tweekers with guns out there more than once, but who gets kicked out of the forest? Family OHV enthusiasts

It comes down to common courtesy and an understanding that everyone deserves access to our public lands.

AC

anthony.cree@gmail.com

Submitted on 2013/06/27 at 2:09 pm

Hikers: show tolerance for every other use group.

MTB: Slow down a bit on multi use trails. Don't skid around every corner (Ranger Creek last week, for instance, had fresh ruts from skidding on EVERY corner). Leave the bike park mentality in the bike park; it doesn't belong on multi use trails.

Equestrians: Expect to see other users and train your horse accordingly. Clean up after yourselves, parking lots shouldn't be full of horse manure. Neither should trails.

Motorcycles: Put a quiet muffler and a trials tire on. Hiker intolerance is your worst enemy; the fringe element within your own ranks is your second worst enemy.

Government: recognize that you represent all recreation groups, not just hikers. Structure funding on an equitable basis. For example, the Discover pass would make a lot more sense as a per user fee, rather than as a per car parking fee. Generally quit screwing everyone but hiking groups.

John

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Submitted on 2013/06/26 at 9:51 am

Question A – the user group umbrella organizations need to prioritize educating their groups on the importance of working together for more access for everyone. Unfortunately, it is my impression that in some cases the leadership of the umbrella organizations believes in further opposing the other groups.

Question B – There are certain accepted "Truths" the groups have for each other which have varying amounts of accuracy. It would help to try to get some impartial facts to either prove or disprove some of these commonly held "Truths". The people that make decisions regarding land use need to use facts rather than emotionalism and false truths when deciding important issues.

Here's a list off the top of my head of some of the "Truths" I've encountered.

Mountain bikers never yield to other users.

Horse riders never clean up after their horses – move the poop off the trail.

All hikers are selfish and want the trails to themselves and won't share with anyone.

Horses are by far the most destructive users on the trails (excepting motorized users)

Horse riders never do trail work (at least in the Puget Sound Region).

Motorized users deserve to be on all trails because their gas and vehicle taxes pay the majority of the cost.

The only reason more state lands are not made available to the public is because the state land managers are lazy and do not want to create more work for themselves.

Mountain bikers are a bunch of lawless hoodlums.

Right now, the users groups are more polarized than they should be due to lack of understanding each other. Facilitating greater understanding between the groups would help the groups understand their common goals rather than keep people focused on half truths and outright falsehoods. Always remember though that for some users, they will focus on the negative no matter what the truth really is. When decisions are made, those extreme viewpoints should be considered for what they are (worthless).

John

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john@moosefish.com

Submitted on 2013/06/26 at 9:51 am

I agree that there is a significant difference between motorized and nonmotorized use. I'm a hiker and tend not to favor areas that are heavily used for motorized recreation. By encouraging users to choose destinations and routes based on current usage (motorized vs. nonmotorized vs. whatever) they will be less likely to come into conflict.

Restrictions on trail use should be based on common values and trail sustainability. A motorized vehicle may cause too much damage to a wet-area trail and hikers on a motorized trail may pose a safety hazard. In some cases,

alternating days for different uses might be possible. The Middle Fork (of the Snoqualmie) trail alternated bicycle days with non-bicycle days to lessen safety and conflict issues.

audra
aadelberger@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/06/26 at 8:35 am

I agree with Kathleen. We need to respect the reasons different groups of people want to get outdoors. As others have said, it looks like there's enough land for a wide variety of trails and experiences. We're not arguing about "elites" here, it seems to me, but about what it means to share something. We have separate urban spaces for different types of activities –think schools, malls, residential areas, and so on– and yet we still "share" the city–think roads, civic spirit, elections. We can do the same in non-urban areas: share them by agreeing on what activities get separate spaces and which ones are to be used by all.

Lori Flemm
loriflemm@live.com
Submitted on 2013/06/25 at 10:08 pm

Question A: User groups need only live by the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

Question B: The government can't fix this problem until each user respects other users' rights to the trail.

David LeBlanc
david@trottingfool.com
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 10:34 pm

I've been on trails shared with just about any type of user, and have seen mostly courteous behavior. If people behave, we can all share, unless the trail just isn't passable. I do think the motorized users have a bigger challenge – they account for the few instances of outright malicious behavior I've seen, and they move a lot faster than anyone else. They're also more likely to accidentally frighten other users. It is probably best for them to have their own space, or at least make sure trails are well signed as shared so everyone can be careful.

As to how everyone can get along, I'll echo what some of the others have said – work together on trail projects. All the nonmotorized users have more in common than not. Some education is sometimes in order, especially in more urban areas – I've seen cyclists put themselves and equestrians in a lot of danger through sheer ignorance. A simple "Hi horsey!" can make a huge difference.

Some trails just aren't passable by a horse or a bicycle – it is fine for those to be hiker only. Others should only be reserved for single use for cause, or if equal areas are reserved for each type of user.

Janice Baker
wannabafarm@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 9:26 pm

Last year while riding our horses on Mt. Spokane, we had a Mountain biker come off of a switchback and was on top of us before we even heard him... It was scary for us, (and we are not novice riders.) and also for our horses..

We had never given it any thought when we started this ride, about a Bike Rider coming out of No place, and putting us both off the trail. It was pretty shocking.

I have always been for sharing the wonderful resources of our most beautiful State. But after this incident happening, what would solve this issue, to make all parties happy? As Riders it makes one very uneasy that this issue happening again, while enjoying our horse back outing. If that had happened to a Novice Rider, or Riders and green Horses it would have had a terrible ending... So hopefully the areas need to be split, or some kind of warning of the danger, of Bikes and Horses...

Safety needs to be addressed, for all, and showing respect for others would go along ways on both sides of the issue.

darcy
djmitchem@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 8:00 pm

1–What can groups/individuals do?

Personally, I mostly hike, but I also work with tourism, land access and rural economic development issues. Our county would love to have a motorized trail component—but there truly is a bias against this (ATV, 4x4, snowmobile etc). Part of it is the Puget Sound (urban) centered state we live in. Things to improve this: I am saddened that WTA has a nonmotorized only bent, and sends out mailers/email/surveys hashing on motorized. We need a group that advocates for ALL trails anywhere. Look at what WTA working with Backcountry horse has been able to do for trails. If that synergy added motorized, imagine what good could happen. Currently, each group picks their type of activity and has their own lobbyist. Our state government is so lobbyist-centered that individuals really don't have a voice. All trail activists need to stick together and unite for trails. I talked to our US Representative who was very impressed when ALL user groups, motorized and non, combined to promote federal dollars for trails.

I like the previous ideas about a sit-down or picnic with all users getting to know each other to find common ground. Maybe joint motorized-horse-hiker work parties on the same trails could build a coalition. Courtesy on the trail, and mentoring young hikers/riders on trail etiquette goes a long way to solving the problem. Hikers need to work on tolerance—do trail apples really don't hurt anything? Does hearing a motor really ruin the whole day?—and motorized needs to be extra careful to stay on trails, and out of water. Everyone should make a commitment this year to try the type of trail recreation they do not like. If you hike, try a motorcycle or 4-wheeler. If you ride, go for a hike or horseback ride. Who knows, you might find a new passion.

2—What can the government do.

Turn roads into multi-use trails instead of a line of tank traps. Get easements to landlocked public land. Change the property tax law to strongly encourage timber companies with millions of acres to keep free public access. Train new employees to respect and value all types of recreation—hunting, 4X4, snowmobile, ATV, everything. (A lot of the colleges have that same “humans are bad and touching the ground is bad” type of bias.) Audit the NOVA program and the RCO looking for bias, waste, and inconsistencies. Use best management practices instead of wasteful reviews to put more funds on the ground. Change the union-protection laws so volunteers can do essential services. Simplify passes. Review all regulations making certain they are absolutely necessary today. Stop with the environmental guilt-for-being-alive already—the real problem is not “stepping off the trail” or camping without a permit but a lack of people who care.

Both groups: Promote an excise tax on outdoor equipment (similar to successful hunting/fishing model) dedicated to on-the-ground trails/facilities.

Chris Marsh
thehouseofccccc@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 6:46 pm

Oh and finally, open all the Public and private forest land to everyone. If you open all the foothill roads back up, you will find that the high country stuff will become less populated because we won't have to go so far away from home to enjoy our hobby.

Thanks,

Chris Marsh
thehouseofccccc@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 6:42 pm

I feel with all the discrimination towards Off-road Users that there won't be a non-governmental solution to the problem. From comments I read from this discussion and previous discussions, I laugh when I hear that OHV's are loud and stinky, comments from horse owners.....I am not sure if they have ever noticed that their poo does stink just like everyone else's. Hikers don't like us because we are motoring in the backwoods, but they are so inclined to drive....though the woods, to get to there hiking destination, seems Ironic. Mountain bikers just want to be able to have their own place to go and not care about the site seeing that we OHV users, hikers and horseback riders tend to like to do. I personally ride motorcycles, quads, and drive a 4x4. After I drive which ever vehicle to my desired ending point, I will hike with my kids to see the sites. I find that the majority of off-road motorcyclists are very courteous and are most likely to help a person in need. Most other OHV users are the same but I have also experienced some bad apples who in my opinion act like the Elitist hikers, they have spent thousands of dollars on their 4x4's and you don't belong. These are all great hobbies for the individual and also family. Ever since they closed Rieter Pit, it seems that Friends and families have split apart. It was a Huge Regionally Centrally Located area that could be used by all. Many have bought camp lots near there for the reason of the easy access plus there were a lot of family activities inside the park as well. The Hikers and Horseback riders killed that. Everywhere that I want to go and that I have taken my kids to as have my parents taught me to go is being closed to appease the elitists. EVERYONE needs to respect and get along with each other. As another commenter has said “QUIT CRIMINALIZING THE OHV USER!!!!!!”

I also feel that the Government can get involved by telling the elitists Sorry, or better NO! It is not yours....it is the publics. Providing more law enforcement managing the parking lots. This heroin, crackhead epidemic is getting very tiresome and if the government can go in and target a terrorist from thousand of miles away.....they need to stop these thugs and terrorists. Washington State government needs to manage its money better so they don't have to steal from what the monies were intended for. If Seattle wants a new tunnel.....they can pay for it, not the whole state. Mercer Island uses the I-90 Bridge not the citizens of Spokane, so I am sorry put a toll on the bridge don't raise my gas taxes to appease the legislator that represents the Island. This society needs to be funded by user base. I should pay usage tax on my vehicles and not overcharged on a motor home that gets driven two to five times a year. This states government should stop spending millions of dollars on consultants to tell a group if a project is feasible or not. There are plenty of engineers on staff that I am sure would love a good project and their salary is already in the budget. Quit killing areas with bureaucracy, over-engineering, and get rid of the safety bubble that we are all being forced to live in. I was once was told.....if you are going to be stupid, you best be tough. Quit paying out to ignorant sue happy people. If I die because I crashed, 1.) it was more than likely it was MY fault. 2.) I died happy. Some families are just not meant for adventure and maybe they need to realize it and stay home and not sue because they did not have adequate warning.....you must assume that you are in the wilderness, you must be a survivor or learn to survive.

This government needs to learn to say no to the wrong people, not the right.

Mike McGlenn
mike@mikemcglenn.com
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 4:32 pm

I too am a Back Country Horseman as are several others noted in the comments. As to question A: The user groups can and should do joint/collaborative projects. When a money issue comes up the agency in question will be much more interested in helping if it sees a cohesive group of users not just one special interest group. In addition, each group brings a different skill set. The hikers learned some years ago that to get volunteers to work beyond about 3 miles from the trailhead was very difficult. Now BCHW partners with WTA to pack in their tools, food and camp 6, 8 10 or whatever miles. The workers hike in light and get the work done. BCHW then goes in and packs it all out to the trailhead on horses and mules. A win deal for all. Something to remember, if a horse can't negotiate a trail often neither can a hiker or biker. So the sharing is beneficial for all parties.

In Georgia the BCH group and several others came up with a COTRAIL plan. The USFS helped and eventually it won a national award for innovation in trail work. You should be able to find it on the Internet.

Have a meet, eat and greet work party. Roger in his comments talks about the Blanchard Mountain. This is a DNR location. Each group comes to work on the trail and trailheads at least one day a year. I think about 100 showed up this year. The horses pack things up to the work spot. The hikers and bikers get to where they need to be. Some group volunteers the food and prep for it. At the end of the day they ALL have learned how much can be accomplished working together.

We at BCH of Whatcom County have had the opportunity to talk at the Bikers meetings, we have invited them to meet with us. These meetings help each side to see that we really aren't so different.

Question B. The government.

The agencies need to openly acknowledge that all user groups exist and not keep noting only a few of them. There are hikers, bikers, equestrians and others. The photos in their brochures need to show all types so that a user hiker in say the North Cascade Park when looking at the information will see that they might meet a horse on a shared trail. The trailheads need the nearly universal signs showing how the trail sharing should work. They can provide the leadership person to make sure the work is done to the correct standard.

There was a program some years ago with the MBSNF where the Ranger could issue a crew leader card to qualified volunteers. This cut back on the manpower and money problems of the agency. The volunteer crew leader could take the project on and get it done without there needing to be an agency person on site all the time. This would be useful now when the agencies are not getting budget money to manage or work their projects.

Horse riding and hiking are quiet recreation. Both parties travel at about 3 – 4 miles per hour. This is what most of the current trails were designed and built for. Mountain biking is by advertisement, observation and emails a thrill sport. Over time the government agencies need to address this from a safety standpoint. For the thrill aspect of the bike sport someplace other than the traditional 3 -4 miles per hour trail needs to be available.

Courtesy and respect for others definitely needs to be reinstated in our lives.

Jack
horsedoc@rainierconnect.com
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 12:59 pm

We as a group (Backcountry Horseman, mountain bikers, hikers (WA Trails Assoc.) and even ATV enthusiast have all joined together to put on twelve Eagle Scout projects that improve trails for all users. All it takes is farsighted people to show how working together benefits all user groups and the Eagle Scouts as well.

Unfortunately the politics keep stealing the funds that should go toward trail maintenance, which causes all groups to compete for funding. By solving that problem some of the conflict would be decreased scientifically.

Herb Gerhardt
hgerhardt@wavecable.com
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 11:58 am

Michael requested that I explain what a Focus Group which I used in my previous post is and how it works.

Here in our Mason/Kitsap County areas we have what we call a Focus Group which is comprised of all user groups like 4x4, Quads, Motorcycle, mountain bike, horse, hunters, fishermen, hikers and individuals who are concerned about our DNR Managed Lands in our area. We generally meet on the first Thursday of the month except for summer months in open public meetings and our local DNR Recreation Manager discusses the issues at hand which will or do affect our recreational opportunities. These include Events (ORV and Non-ORV) in which 25+ people plan to participate in, Timber Sale plans which may affect existing trails therefore impacting the recreational users and other things like enforcement, camping, trash, safety, wetland and wildlife issues.

When any user has specific access, facilities, trails camping or any other concerns, they can discuss them at an open forum and the USERS present will come up with recommendations to DNR as to how they, the users, want these resolved. The DNR Recreation Manager asks what all the users think about the topic and then calls for a consensus vote as to what actions/rules the users want DNR to take.

We have used this process now for around 20 years it works really well and I recommend it for all recreation areas to hash out and resolve conflicts between users. I think this process would also work very well in areas where large Federal land owners and private timber companies allow recreation to come up with agreeable rules that everyone can live with.

Kathleen
mksmith@olympen.com
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 11:54 am

It is apparent that motorized and nonmotorized user groups do not have shared values. Therefore, we can save time by not arguing values. Equestrians, hikers, mountain bikers value quiet, visual enjoyment of natural habitat, and viewing wildlife up close.

ORV users are seeking varied motorized experiences in back country areas away from paved roads. These users do not object to loud motor noise and are not bothered by gasoline odors or exhaust fumes. They appear to prefer a faster mode of travel.

It is reasonable for these two user groups to have separate access to separate trail systems. The two user groups – motorized and nonmotorized are simply not compatible. While I personally regret the amount of noise in our world and dislike the destruction of habitat, nonetheless, ORV users wish an experience with motors that is off-road.

That a good deal of our nation is already committed to noise and motorized vehicles; and since hiking, biking and horseback riding are means of quiet enjoyment of nature, and are much valued by an aging population as well and younger age groups, as well as a preponderance of people seeking quiet and a retreat to natural beauty; we can best be served by separating the user groups.

Signage pointing out respectful, responsible behaviors would be helpful. But definitely separate the motorized from nonmotorized users.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Don Larson
larson_don@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 11:13 am

What can user groups do on their own? – Understand and accept the various user needs with an understanding that there is room for everyone in this state. Just like there are different “types” or “classes” of nonmotorized users, there are different “types” or “classes” of motorized users. I think that many nonmotorized users don’t see the difference between a light weight two wheeled motorcycle and a 4 wheeled ATV or Jeep. Off-road motorcyclists primarily enjoy single track trail, the same trails desired by Equine, MTB and Hikers. Understanding amongst users that single track trails are used by motorcyclists that have no desire to ride quad or jeep trails, (or forest roads), would be a start in identifying the reason for conflict on multi use trails. I can assure a lot of Hikers that many of the trails that you hike on today were originally built by cross country motorcyclists. Off-road motorcyclists can cover 70+ miles of single track in a day and see everything TO INCLUDE wild animals such as goats, deer, elk, bear, etc.... (For those that think wild animals are “run off” by motorized users).

There are so many acres and square miles out there of available resources that there should not be any conflict. Multi-use trail systems can work with the understanding that “multiple uses” are occurring... and to the claims of safety issues – How bout we start with facts and statistics? I have been riding single track multi-use trails for 30+ years and have never even heard of an accident between a motorized and nonmotorized user? If nonmotorized users want to use a trail system specific to their use, they should be able to and as such, a motorized user should be able to find a single track trail system that they can use specifically as well.... the resources and space are there!!!! But to go out on a multi-use trail system and immediately start complaining about one particular user group is short sighted at least.... I have also heard the excuse of noise and the fact that nonmotorized users do not get “peaceful enjoyment” that apparently they are entitled to and to that I think many motorized users will admit that more education is needed in keeping our machines quiet. There are state and federal laws that can easily be enforced on the trail and the vast majority of motorcyclists are keeping the dB levels well below the legal limits but to put things in perspective as nonmotorized users, you will also hear aircraft while in the outdoors, probably more often than you will hear an ORV.

So... Understanding the needs of the different users amongst users, tolerance amongst users, proper trail etiquette, etc....

What can the government do? – First and foremost, quit bowing down to elitist hiking and environmental groups that are anti-access. Make sure that lobbyists and/or special interests are not employed by the forest managers!!! Cut through the red tape and be able to open up new opportunities to user groups that are motivated to make such opportunities work. Allowing elitists to green wash a situation and say that allowing different or multiple uses is bad for the environment without producing science or even common sense to the argument has to stop.... the threat of a law suit needs to be eliminated.

Restore the NOVA allocations to their original intent.

Start taxing bicycles, horses and hiking boots just like ORV's are currently taxed. This funding can be used accordingly and then these user groups can also become a self funded form of recreation just like ORV users.

Quit closing gates and shutting out the public. Provide more enforcement and for Pete's sake start acting on tips and evidence of illegal activity when a recreational user presents... (I actually gave a name and address on some mail and check book that I found at the bottom of a pile of household garbage at a Reiter clean up, to a DNR enforcement officer who looked me right in the face and told me they could not do anything with it?!?!?) When people understand there are consequences they are less likely to commit crimes against the forest and we can start unlocking all of these big ugly yellow gates!

Thanks.

Rod Farlee
rodfarlee@olympen.com
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 10:58 am

David Hiatt, the 2002 NOVA fuel use study found that ORV use contributed only 20% of revenues (80% USFS/NPS road use and gas tax revenue is by hikers and stock users accessing trailheads and campgrounds), but ORV facilities benefit from the majority of NOVA expenditures.

I support your goal of more ORV opportunities, but the facts don't support your contention that ORV use is being shorted by NOVA. See <http://www.wta.org/action/current-issues/nova> updated by http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/manuals&forms/Manual_13-NOVA-EE.pdf page 10.

tchrlady
eileenpeter50@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/06/24 at 10:34 am

First, thank you for asking us!

In your conversation so far, you have expressed frustration about the various trails user groups not cooperating. Q1How would you fix this problem? Q2What are the things user groups can do to fix this problem on their own without asking government to help?

Answer to Q1-2: I would ask ambassadors from each group (people unafraid of conflict and excellent speaking skills to go attend the meetings of the *other groups*, example: I am an equestrian (Pacific Northwest Endurance Rides, American Endurance Ride Conference, Back Country Horsemen and Washington) and have an explicit enduring interest in using and sharing trails; I could find like-minded folks in MY groups to attend meetings of hikers, mountain bikers, and motorized vehicle groups so I would then understand their worldview and share mine on their turf. From there we could continue to share and air issues and be more cohesive in nature when supporting the creation and maintenance of outdoor trails for all of our usage. This could also serve as education for all of us as we learn what the other group values and hear what they think about our choice of recreation. I would love it if we were explicitly invited to those local/regional meetings. I am unsure of where to find the meetings, thus see my answer to the next Q

Q3: What are the things government can do to fix (or help fix) this problem?

Government could help with ensuring all user groups are heard (example, DNR's Capitol Forest management plan) for all management issues. Government could also help with having links on sites about recreational lands TO the user groups websites so we could have easy access to meetings and contacts for the user groups; it would help with group usage cohesion. In addition, government could also publish educational treatises created by each user group that shows what they do and value.

Linda Roe
lzroe1951@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/06/23 at 7:57 pm

Motorized users and nonmotorized users need to stay separated. For areas that are contested so much maybe a shared use, but on different days, would work. Even numbered days, one group, odd days another. Cooperating on trail maintenance and cleaning up trash would go a long way toward getting your particular user group some PR with other user groups and government agencies.

Lloyd Gelentere
lloydkg@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/23 at 3:35 pm

Keep motorized vehicle trails separate from horse riders, bikers and hikers. Allow motorize vehicles to use logging roads or forestry roads. Stop pulling out culverts and blocking these roads. By blocking these roads motor bikes have no place to go except on trails

Erik B
mrairikk@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/06/23 at 10:16 am

The issue I have with other users groups is that they use lies and threat of court action if the government agencies (FS, BLM, DNR) allow motorized user groups to try and expand their ever dwindling trail system. And as most everyone knows the government agencies will back down at any threat of court action.

If all user groups can not get along and figure out a sensible plan of the public lands that all tax paying users pay for, then no one should be allowed.

Not everyone can hike or bike or ride horses.

Roger B Nelson
rogerramjet1961@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/23 at 9:46 am

Hi my name is Roger Nelson, I belong to a organization called Backcountry Horsemen Of Washington here is a perfect example of different user groups working together on June 1st of the last few years is National Trail Days and all these different user groups work together on different trails and projects ours happen to be at Blanchard Trail system in Alger, Washington, outside off Bellingham, we haul gravel with our stock with L boards and five gallon buckets and gravel bags the animals are packing two hundred pounds of gravel each horse or mule carries to the trail where it is needed. Also, we work with the USFS, we work with this federal agency and hiking clubs to pack in their camping supplies and food and tools to work on trails.

Herb Gerhardt
hgerhardt@wavecable.com
Submitted on 2013/06/23 at 9:32 am

In our Mason/Kitsap county areas, I do not believe we really have such disagreements do to the cooperative efforts of the user groups who attend the Tahuya/Green Mountain DNR Focus Group Meetings. We hash out disagreements at this Focus Group and generally come up with an agreeable solution.

Furthermore, I do agree with using NOVA funds for DNR grant projects and Education/Enforcement. I encourage more Focus Groups for more local lands to resolve disagreements between user groups.

Tricia Ann Foster
Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/06/23 at 9:24 am

FS/DNR/WA St Parks can have patrons sign respect contracts (such as pack it in pack it out/No dumping) and liability waivers and RE-OPEN the closed roads Such as in the Sultan Basin. There are 1000's of miles of DNR/forest service roads ORV's could ride on. ORV's riders should petition areas they need, especially locations where there are not already hiking trails to lakes/lookout towers etc. Insist/demand refunds until you get an appropriate location in Washington. I heard there is only one, and it's dangerously eroded. Respect gets respect, most of the time.

Tricia Ann Foster

Triciaann777@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/06/23 at 9:03 am

I hike/bike to the right of the road/trail, unless it is not safe to do so. If there is a hiker/walker on the forest service road I slow down/stay to the right. Horses won't get along well with mountain bikes. Aggressive off leash dogs or dogs that poop on the trail are not going to get along with me. Citing/penalizing disrespect for keeping a trail clean could help prevent some future problems.

Kevin,

Forest service trail maps show which trails are meant for specific user groups. Not all trails are on the maps, but I've noticed since 1992 that a lot of 'hiking only trails' cannot be biked due to the rough/awkward narrow rocky areas filled w/ tree roots trails, not to mention elevation.

The US Forest service sells the maps that appear to 'exclude' user groups/separate user groups.

I think US forest service is part of the government.

Tootie Crowson
crowson2@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/06/23 at 8:59 am

I would like to see boldly lettered signs which say the site is for horse camping only in horse camps.

Also we could use informational signage educating bike riders as too how too conduct themselves when the trails are shared by users riding horses. My concern is that the bike riders goal is to challenge themselves by going as fast as they can. When they come upon a horse this is very dangerous.

Perhaps changing the user groups mix by combining bikes and ATVs, instead of bikes and horses would solve the problem.

I believe these issues can be addressed without government intervention.

Larry Beardslee
larry__beardslee@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/22 at 9:34 pm

We share the planet, we can share the trails.. All hikers can use all trails, but some are for the exclusive use of the elite. I encourage complainers or those observing bad behavior to photograph (even with cell phone) and send in to our trail website. Few want their behavior recorded.

See first 2 paragraphs of Dave Hiatt's letter.

Application for NOVA funds now requires a staff or consultant—much too burdensome.

Al Pelletier
sekiusweep@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/22 at 5:24 pm

For areas where there is high demand for different and non compatible usage, groups may need to agree to a reservation system and perhaps even a lottery system to accommodate each other. User fees would be appropriate, as the constant use will likely require constant maintenance. It's not like in mountain man days, but large events can be scheduled well in advance .

If the fuel taxes apply to “publicly funded roads and highways,” and if ORV trail construction and maintenance is publicly funded, maybe the fuel tax exemption no longer applies. If people can afford to burn up fifty gallons of fuel a day, another \$5 in fuel tax won't make them stay home, or ruin their outing.

Hunters are accustomed to paying special “tags” to hunt in some specific areas. They also pay daily permit fees to private landowners. This isn't my dream of the “wild west”, but we would not be having this discourse if demand did not exceed enjoyable usage of some public lands.

Linda McAskill
lmcask1@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/06/22 at 5:22 pm

Safety and not destroying the land, frightening off all the natural animals should be a priority. I am a fan of any nonmotorized use. Hikers, equestrian, and bikers; keep them all involved in maintaining the trails and camping areas. Trails signs sure would be appreciated and help encourage “Go Play Outside! Keep our generation and the younger ones to go outside and enjoy the fabulous opportunities on public land. Keep in mind 10% of any group are usually complainers.

Kevin McGrath
reliable.kevin@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/22 at 3:15 pm

This is a simple issue of basic courtesy that is easily resolved by the users. They must share the trails with other user groups and stop maneuvering to exclude others from the resources. Government can help by providing some leadership and discouraging those who would exclude another group.

This does not mean there cannot be specialized trails or areas. However, when one user group has access to almost all public lands and fights to deny ever decreasing areas to others, it will lead to ever increasing contempt for those users and the system which supports their exclusion of others.

Dave Hiatt
dhiatt07@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/06/22 at 3:06 pm

Answer to question A –

Pressure the hiking elitists to agree to the sharing of desirable public lands with equestrians, mountain bicycles and OHVs. Add this pressure by insisting that land management reward the users who will share public lands by providing them with more opportunity while removing opportunity from hiking elitists who refuse to share and instead whine until they get their way, i.e. reward cooperation and penalize selfishness.

Answer to question B –

The solutions are available if the legislators in Olympia will support the State Constitution as they have sworn to do. Gas taxes for fuel use on other than State funded roads and highways is to be refunded to users per the WA State Constitution.

NOVA (Nonhighway Off-Road Vehicle Activities) was created in the early seventies as an aggregation of the refund eligible money from ONLY the Off-road Vehicle (4WD, ATV & Dirt Bike) users. The 1972-73 ATV fuel use study estimated 4.6% of the state fuel tax to be produced by ALL nonhighway vehicle use, e.g. ORVs On & Off nonhighway roads + street legal vehicle operation ON Nonhighway Roads to hiking trailheads, scenic areas, hunting, fishing, berry picking, etc. The ORV users gave up their State Constitutional right to an individual refund of their personal nonhighway & off-road gas tax refund moneys in exchange for this legislation (creating NOVA) that was to benefit only them via their 1% of the overall 4.6%.

Unconstitutional legislative action has subsequently arbitrarily capped the 1% at significantly less than 1% of the gas tax. Other legislative actions at the behest of anti-access, anti-motorized, anti-shared use, paid lobbyists and biased IAC (now RCO) staff stole a large percentage of the NOVA funds for nonmotorized use. See my prior posts for details.

The solution is to have the RCO and all Off & On nonhighway road (NHR) users support returning a full 1% to benefit (see recent JLARC report) its rightful owners, the ORV users. The RCO should then work with the On NHR users to obtain their own funding from the remaining 3.6% of the Nonhighway on road use instead of stealing from the ORV users.

We should also end the DNR's skim of approximately 36% of the NOVA funds right off the top as they have continually reduced or eliminated ORV use on DNR lands, are now directly charging for access to DNR lands and should no longer have these funds.

A true 1% of the gas tax for ONLY the NOVA (Off-Road) ORV trail users and proper allocation of the other 3.6% of the gas tax from Nonhighway on road use for nonmotorized trail users will provide adequate funding if the appropriate users are allowed to select where those funds are utilized, i.e. user control, NOT RCO control.

ROUND 5 FINDINGS

Round 5 Question

Over the years trail uses have changed. Today, a trail is often used for more than one type of activity (e.g., equestrian, ORV, hiking, mountain bicycling, etc.). The documents that guide planning for trails and NOVA recommend designating a ‘primary use’ (primary management objective) to identify the main purpose for the trail.

We have two questions for you,

- For the trails that you use, is it clear what the primary management objective is?
- How is that objective made clear to you (e.g., signs, design elements of the trail, outreach materials, Web sites, people in your network)?

Summary Observations by the Blog Facilitator

In this round of discussion, 30 people commented, providing 32 comments. Below is a summary of the themes of the comments, followed by a *verbatim* reporting of all comments.

For the trails that you use, is it clear what the primary management objective is?

Answers to this question ranged from “yes” to “no.”

Those people saying “yes” cited the look and feel of a trail, signs, and authoritative sources (like agency websites) as providing them with a clear understanding of the primary management objective for a trail. Those people saying “no” cited lack of signs as a key reason the primary management objective was not clear.

A packgoat enthusiast also noted two less obvious implications of a trail’s primary management objective not being clear.

- First, an assumption by some users is that if a trail is labeled for an intended use (e.g., equestrians), then some of these users assume that is the sole use. Consequently, they are not mindful of the potential presence of other users thereby creating the potential for conflicts.
-
- Second, the absence of labeling a trail as potentially being used by a rare user group, like packgoat users, means other users are not looking for and, therefore, are not prepared to avoid conflicts.
-

One Town Hall contributor put it this way:

“There are also times when it says ‘equestrian’ trail, yet that to many horse folks means it is a horse trail only and no other stock should be using it. I would like to see ‘stock’ trail signs – this again is a safety issue too for other trail users. On trails we are on with our packgoats we generally put a sign up at the trailhead that indicates ‘Please be aware – Packgoats are on the Trail.’”

How is that objective made clear to you (e.g., signs, design elements of the trail, outreach materials, Web sites, people in your network)?

- Signs at trailheads
- Map annotations
- User group Web sites (e.g., Washington Trails Association (<http://www.wta.org>); Northwest Motorcycle Association <http://www.nmaoffroad.org>); Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance (<http://evergreenmtb.org>); Back Country Horsemen of Washington (<http://www.bchw.org>)
- Guidebooks
- On-line forums and social media (examples not given): “I also participate in on-line forums where mountain bikers dialogue about all manner of mountain biking related matters – including where to ride, current trail conditions, etc”
- The nature of the trail bed. “...although a trail may be marked as open to several activities (hike, horse, bike etc). I have found myself hiking trails that are clearly preferred by horses, motorized or mtn. bike. The tread of the trail is the real ‘tell’ more so than a sign telling what it is legally open to”
- Knowledge shared inside a network of users
- The Bainbridge Island Metro Park and Recreation District recently implemented signage that works with smart phone technology and enables a user’s location to be displayed as a phone app

Suggestions for Improvements

- More and better signage at trailheads
 - Postings on property owner Web sites (e.g., Forest Service, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife’s LT Murray webpage)
 - Standardize this part of information presentation across recreation providers so it can be easily spotted via a shared ‘branding’ protocol
 - Improve information for private lands as they are not as well documented as public lands
 - In addition to trailhead signs that inform users about the designated primary use of a trail, add model safety and courtesy behaviors that are appropriate for the multiple-use on that trail
 - Add icons or other descriptive annotations to trail maps
-

Verbatim Comments from the Town Hall Web site in Response to Round 5

darcy
djmitchem@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/26 at 8:52 am

1) Although a trail may be marked as open to several activities (hike, horse, bike etc). I have found myself hiking trails that are clearly preferred by horses, motorized or mtn. bike. The tread of the trail is the real "tell" more so than a sign telling what it is legally open to.

2) The management objective is unclear until you are on the ground. Over time you just learn which areas are preferred by which groups. Maps are the best way to spend money on this. Signs good too, but expensive to replace and easy targets.

Lys Burden
WPburden@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/07/23 at 1:56 am

I mostly use the trail network in our small city that is developed for both walking and bicycling. Trails are not designated for specific user groups, I have never seen any user conflict, and people I have met have been very courteous on trails. The outlying trails are even used by horse back riders, which can cause some surface damage in some seasons, but does not seem to be any great problem.

Linda Roe
lzroe1951@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/07/20 at 9:22 pm

Yes, on the trails that I use it is clear about what the primary intended use is. I use trails for hiking, and obtain the information from hiking websites (WTA) guidebooks and maps. It is sometimes not clear whether a trail is suitable for horses or mountain bikes. I avoid the trails open to motorized recreation.

Linda McAskill
lmcask1@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/07/18 at 9:43 am

I am an equestrian, trail rider. Would be helpful if the user information, or best suited information is posted on the property owner website. Such as USFS, DNR, or LT Murray. Adequate parking information would be very helpful for most of us that trailer or drive to the trailhead. Trail signs would sure help in safety, for all public recreation. Even if it is just a diamond marker, or a sign that says "trail". If route crosses road, need to know where the trail starts up again / continues.

Don Larson
larson_don@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/17 at 2:43 pm

Q1. Yes but it's not easy and there is certainly no standard.

Q2. I would say that it varies from system to system. I use primarily high country, single track multi-use systems to ride my off-road motorcycle. Depending which Ranger District or DNR region, the trailheads are sometimes clearly marked barring any vandalism (which usually means someone has tried to remove the motorized symbols) but sometimes they are not clearly marked or designated at all. I get most of my information from the Northwest Motorcycle Association, (NMA), website, the ranger district's websites or social media groups. I have found discrepancies between maps and trailhead signage as to whether or not specific trails are open to motorized use or not. The Internet and personal experience are what I rely on most to identify the intended use of a trail system.

Karen Johnson
kjrjatprairierim@aol.com
Submitted on 2013/07/16 at 8:56 pm

DNR usually does a good job of signing trail use as does USFS. Use of private lands is more difficult since it may not be signed or publicized as to use.

Perry Barrett
perry@biparks.org
Submitted on 2013/07/16 at 4:06 pm

Our trail classification is based on three classes of trails in our park lands. These three trail types range among user groups, design elements and underlying land restrictions, such as conservation easements or grant restrictions. The trails with the greatest width, Class I, are designed for heavy participation, nonmotorized users with larger tread width of 5'-6' and include built structures, such as bridges, boardwalks, culverts, signage and trailhead parking. Gravel is used to augment native soils, and trail design reduces obstacles while increasing sight lines in this category. Class II type trails have a narrower width, less gravel, fewer built structures and parking provided at the trailhead. Both Class I and II accommodate equestrians in parts and as mapped, and both classes of trail category provide for a seasonal, proactive approach to maintenance. Our Class III trail designation is the District's narrowest at 3', pruning is conducted as needed and natural materials are preferred over gravel. These trails are targeted for hiking use and occasional equestrian use depending on the site's topography. This last trail category serves as a connector type trail within a larger park trail system. Recently, we have implemented signage that works with Smart phone technology and enables a user's location to be displayed as a phone app. Dogs are typically on-leash by park rules.

Donna Ruelas Semasko
dsemasko@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/07/16 at 2:36 pm

No, many trails that we as packgoat enthusiasts use, are not clear as to the primary management objective. We use BLM, DNR, forest, state forests, and a few state park trails. It would be educational for the other trail users on these trails to know that packgoats are on the trail, especially for horse riders and bicyclists. This is a safety issue. Many times a trail has no designation as to who/what is allowed to use the trail. There are also times when it says "equestrian" trail, yet that to many horse folks means it is a horse trail only and no other stock should be using it. Would like to see "stock" trail signs – this again is a safety issue too for other trail users. On trails we are on with our packgoats we generally put a sign up at the trailhead that indicates "Please be aware – Packgoats are on the Trail."

John
ladmo@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 7:31 pm

As a mountain biker, I obtain trail information via the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance website, which provides a wealth of information related to riding opportunities. Evergreen does not post trail information related to locations bikes are not allowed. I also participate in on-line forums where mountain bikers dialogue about all manner of mountain biking related matters – including where to ride, current trail conditions, etc. When I go to a trail the first time, I always take the time to read signs and other informational postings.

I most often ride trails near my home that were built by mountain bikers, who also maintain them, but the trails I am thinking of primarily exist on private land that access is granted via a permit system, so that may exist outside of your questions above.

I sometimes ride at Tiger Mountain. As far as I can remember, besides the signs illustrating the right of way rules, there is no indication of a primary use. This is curious because the new trail that opened August last year, and the other trail nearing completion, are entirely (as far as I know) constructed by mountain bikers. It would be nice if the community that invests their own sweat and money and time into building a trail was granted primary use status. I believe that is the way it should be.

Byron Stuck
nmatrust@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 4:59 pm

I'd like to add this to my comments just submitted:

I've seen DNR sign studies spend nearly \$500k of our hard earned gas taxes and user fees and with very little benefit. Maintaining accurate web listings with modest on the ground signage is what I'd buy if it were my money ...

Byron Stuck
nmatrust@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 4:56 pm

Yes, the trails that I use are listed as multiple use where motorized use is permitted on the web. There may also be local icon signs showing this. When it's not visible with trail signage the websites do list this and that's where I typically look first anyway. In my 35 years here these areas have been fairly stable so the motorized users I ride with know where to ride, and where not to ride. The occasional new visit I take (to Foggy Dew for example) was preceded by both the web research to find legit motorized trails as well as online forum research to confirm practice. I don't find local signage typically available and wouldn't want to pay for more of it if it were. The web pages can't be destroyed or wear out as easily as the web information!

Lori Lennox
llennox82@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 4:17 pm

For the most part there is adequate signage on most of the trails I use, that is if vandals haven't shot them or stolen them. And with the Internet it is now very easy to verify that info ahead of time by going to the land manager websites. Know where you go! The Back Country Horsemen social media options are great for us stock users who want to know where we can ride our horses and mules, including trail conditions.

One thing I have on my wish list for all trails is a set speed limit. I think that would help all users have fewer issues with the other ones. A galloping horse, a trail runner, or a biker going at speed can all be dangerous to other users who are going at the walking pace most trails are designed for. Specific trails all going one way for those wishing to go fast might be an idea in some areas?

Heather McCartney
hmccartney@ci.mukilteo.wa.us
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 2:18 pm

As a managing agency, we decide on the trail use as part of the preliminary scoping of the Master Plan for the parkland. This allows users to comment on what they would like and usually how it is being used currently. Our trails have a primary use for walkers and runners. In one case, we are allowing mountain bikes and are monitoring wear and tear and whether that use can be sustained. One change to assist with allowing that use is using gravel rather than bark. In a second case, the "social trails" were created by mountain bikers and this allowed runners and walkers to use the trails. So, when it came time to approve a Master Plan for this park and open space, mountain bikers are intended as a continued use. Walkers also asked that they can walk their dogs. Our parks have leash laws, so we have allowed that and are monitoring whether accidents between walkers, dogs and bikers occur. If there are accidents, then we will need to revisit the uses and whether separate trails need to be designated. We use signs at the entrances of trails to indicate whether mountain biking is allowed.

Smthfoxgrl
abuschling@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 1:57 pm

yes
signs

Kathleen
mksmith@olympen.com
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 11:43 am

#1 clearly mark trailhead with uses – hikers, equestrians, mountain bikers. Clearly post safety behaviors when horses are passing hikers; bikers should slow on "blind" corners, and/or stop to allow horses to pass. Clearly mark "Nonmotorized Use Only".

#2 more outreach materials and maps clearly marked with uses would be helpful. Many of us hikers and equestrians do not want to encounter motorized vehicles.

It is my understanding that horses can access Olympic National Park at some trailheads. This should be made clear on maps.

Tootie Crowson
crowson2@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 10:36 am

As a point of general information. The Back Country Horsemen of Washington maintain trails in Capital Forest. We pack in with mules, horses and gravel to build and repair trails.

Tootie Crowson
crowson2@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 10:23 am

Yes I know what users can use the trails as I read the signage.

This weekend a woman was nearly killed while riding her horse in Capital Forest. A mountain bike came around a blind corner at high speed. She ended up in the ER with a huge gash on her face requiring 15 stitches. This has always been a major concern for horseback riders. I question the wisdom of mixing bikes and horses on the same trails. Wouldn't it be smarter to put wheeled vehicles together, and leave horses and hikers together?

davemcmains
wrongwa@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 8:55 am

As I am a motorized user, I rely on Forrest service trailhead signs and maps. The one thing I like and respect is that OHV (four wheel drive) trails are the only true multiple use trail system! We will allow any user group to use our trails, but you have to remember that "everyone" is using the trails so you have to be more tolerant to different user groups. I feel we as motorized users do not get a fair shake in that respect. We welcome any users to utilize our trail systems! I find it disturbing that some single track trails are hiker only and you can not use Horses or mountain bikes on them. If hikers want trails that only hikers can use, then go to the wilderness areas, we have a lot of hiker only trails there and you do not have to travel far to find a wilderness there!

Forest Shomer
inspass@whidbey.net
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 8:37 am

I use public trails only, primarily on the Olympic Peninsula and on islands in the Salish Sea. And yes, the intended use of most of those trails is generally obvious, if not always by signage, then by the presence of a stile at the trailhead. Still, I will notice tire treads on some of those trails that are marked for foot traffic only.

Tina
tina.miller@kingcounty.gov
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 8:13 am

Having a primary user identify is a key to the respect that other users give to those primary users. As an example, Tiger Mt. Forest near the summit – mountain bikes are the primary user. Bikes are expecting others to get off the trails for them, while across Hwy 18 to the south on Taylor Mt. forest – the primary user is horses. I see people riding mountain bikes getting off the trail to allow the horses to move through. More signage would help even more to implement what is in the plans.

Dave
kdx220dave@yahoo.com
199.245.127.13
Submitted on 2013/07/15 at 4:26 am

Yes,

Typically the trail systems are marked as to what user groups they are intended for and usually maps are available.

ross krump
rossk@q.com
Submitted on 2013/07/14 at 12:46 pm

The trails and ORV paths that I use most are on the Olympic Peninsula, on National Park, Forest Service, DNR and private timber lands. Those who have never been here and enjoyed these trails and roads might find all this access hard to even believe! National Park is walk-in only, no animals or bikes. Most Forest Service and DNR land is drive and/or walk horseback bicycle, etc. And there is almost zero traffic most days. When logging is going on, there are usually warning signs about the truck traffic. Hunting is the most utilized non-industry access purpose on these lands. The private forest lands are often walk or bicycle only, and some require a fee; \$10 per day is typical. No, there is little signage on the roads as to the recreational opportunities.

It is necessary to google up the various agencies or major landowners and maybe phone them.

It is not as "wide open" now as it was back in the days of 1950's up on till 1970's. More roads are gated. But while most who live here take all this access for granted, many visitors seem ecstatic at seeing so much forest, big trees and occasional wild animals. These gravel roads may be the best way for handicapped people to ever see these things. The limiting factor is usually a place to park. There is no special security at most places you can park. Fortunately, there has been very little "car prowling" around here. I can't promise anything, but I often park and walk many miles from my vehicle.

We The People, need to be able to use OUR land for our recreation ORV needs, and the same goes for all of the rest of the people, specking for me self and others, when we get older our walking ability become less able to talk.

Chuck Preble, Peninsula Trails Coalition
 chuckpreble@msn.com
 65.102.190.143
 Submitted on 2013/07/14 at 11:45 am

The primary objective of the trail I most use and support (the Olympic Discovery Trail) is to safely support multiple types of users. The primary users supported are walkers/hikers/runners, bicyclists (road and mountain), disabled users/mobility devices, and equestrians (where possible). Thus it is a multi-user trail, or in the AASHTO trail standards terminology, a shared use path. This objective has shaped the design of the trail in many ways, such as width, surface, grade, turn radius, signage, etc. This is made clear to users through signage, such as rules for sharing, passing, control of dogs, etc, and by information posted on kiosks at trail access points.

We also state our trail objectives in another way, which relates to the users purpose for using the trail. We support three primary purposes: recreation, commuting, and tourism. These have also shaped the design of the trail. For instance, in support of commuters, the trail connects and passes through the major population centers in the region. Our maps and website are primarily designed to provide the information nonmotorized tourists need to plan trips using the trail.

Sheila
 mrs.budb@comcast.net
 Submitted on 2013/07/13 at 10:32 pm

No, I would not say that the management objective is clear.

I usually find out about trails for equestrian use from friends. Sometimes there is signage but more often not.

Lloyd Gelentere
 lloydkgh@gmail.com
 Submitted on 2013/07/13 at 9:31 pm

Question #1 No, signs are not available or have been taken down.

Question #2 signs

Tricia Ann Foster
 Triciaann777@yahoo.com
 Submitted on 2013/07/13 at 9:14 pm

Usually it is clear what a trail is primarily used for. The forest service often has signs that say no biking etc if they don't want bikers on it. The trail itself often dictates if bikes for example should not be on the trail. It is too difficult/too many roots/rocks/turns that are not manageable, except for hiking.

The forest service maps also show what a trails primary use is on the backs of the green trails maps (5 min. map).

Design elements of the trail such as a wider single track (wide trail) can fit a horse, but many can not, the terrain appears too difficult/ such as winding elevation going over and under fallen logs.

Many hiking/biking guide books describe trails in the books.

Tarekith
Tarekith@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/13 at 7:58 pm

The trails I use are designed for sustainable mountain biking most of the time, with erosion and water runoff counter-measures usually making it clear who designed and maintains the trail (bikers).

Kathryn Longfellow
klongfellow@frontier.com
Submitted on 2013/07/13 at 7:52 pm

For the trails that I use it is clear who the expected primary user is. I get that information from trail guides/books and from websites.

Herb Gerhardt
hgerhardt@wavecable.com
Submitted on 2013/07/13 at 7:47 pm

Yes, in the Tahuya and Green Mountain State Forests the trail objective is clearly known by maps, signs and Internet. I do not think anyone has a question of knowing what is and is not permitted in our area. DNR is doing a good job in that respect.

Al Pelletier
sekiusweep@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/13 at 7:25 pm

The trails and ORV paths that I use most are on the Olympic Peninsula, on National Park, Forest Service, DNR and private timber lands. Those who have never been here and enjoyed these trails and roads might find all this access hard to even believe! National Park is walk-in only, no animals or bikes. Most Forest Service and DNR land is drive and/or walk, horseback, bicycle, etc. And there is almost zero traffic most days. When logging is going on, there are usually warning signs about the truck traffic. Hunting is the most utilized non-industry access purpose on these lands. The private forest lands are often walk or bicycle only, and some require a fee, \$10 per day is typical. No, there is little signage on the roads as to the recreational opportunities.

It is necessary to google up the various agencies or major landowners and maybe phone them.

It isn't quite as "wide open" now as when I moved here in the 1970s. More roads are gated. But while most who live here take all this access for granted, many visitors seem ecstatic at seeing so much forest, big trees and occasional wild animals. These gravel roads may be the best way for handicapped people to ever see these things. The limiting factor is usually a place to park. There is no special security at most places you can park. Fortunately, there has been very little "car prowling" around here. I can't promise anything, but I often park and walk many miles from my vehicle.

Joan Fleming
joanfleming@q.com
Submitted on 2013/07/13 at 7:03 pm

It depends on the trail and the "owner". I am a horseback rider and a hiker. Some trails clearly designate who the users are – motorized vs. nonmotorized and then maybe mountain bike/hike/horse or just hike/horse (e.g. Capitol Forest – DNR). The same usually goes for state and/or National Forest. Other trails are very informally marked if at all even within the DNR system. Private lands (e.g. Weyerhaeuser, etc.) usually have some designation at entry – usually stating nonmotorized. DNR, State Parks, State/National Forest usually have websites that clearly state authorized uses. Green Trails maps are also helpful.

Norm
normbuckley@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/07/13 at 6:59 pm

Yes (On maintained hiking trails). There is usually a FS sign at the trailhead. The trail is a conduit to get to an objective (peak) as a path of least resistance. Knowing it is or is not used by other activities does not usually concern the hiker/climber from what I have observed. That information is not on the MBSNF web site so most

ROUND 6 FINDINGS

Round 6 Question

In this online discussion you've told us that communication among trails user groups is important. You said that by communicating better you could:

- promote respect and understanding among users
- work together more effectively to accomplish more for trails

If you were going to improve communication between users, how would you do it? Tell us about how you envision more communication occurring:

- What tools or mechanisms might work?
- How could there be an incentive for people to use it and have the desired impact of improving the quality and quantity of communications?
- Who would host/maintain it?
- Would it be used?
- What purposes would it serve and how would you tell if it was meeting those purposes?

Summary Observations by the Blog Facilitator

In this round of discussion, 14 people commented, providing 14 comments. Below is a summary of the themes of the comments, followed by a *verbatim* reporting of all comments.

Potential Interventions

- Improve and increase the signage, especially those that stress good safety behaviors,
 - "...clearly defining usage rules well before the trailhead..."
- Make events sponsored by one user group known to other user groups so there can be shared participation.
 - "A website that listed all the recreational landscapes around the state and scheduled events on each one would help."
- Actively manage for user-group interactions.
 - A member of the Backcountry Horsemen put it this way, "Some entity that will exist over the long haul will need to be the moderator for whatever system evolves. The user groups can come and go. A government entity will be around for awhile. So the agency that is dealing with the issue will need to have a person with responsibility for maintaining the system and monitoring it. The agencies of course have no money and not much for staff, so this will be difficult, they will have to want to do it and plan for it."
 - But, at the same time, ensure balanced and fair participation, "Please don't let one group take command of the whole thing i.e. hiking community. Allow other groups input, snowmobilers, fishermen, hunters, motorcyclists, etc."

- ‘Get together’ groups need to be, “... manageable in size and fairly represent the spectrum of users.”
- Create or build on a forum for inter-group communications.
 - “Most trail advocates, in my experience, love to talk about their project, and are willing to seek cooperative efforts. The challenge has been a forum to make it happen.”
 - “It would be good if more people would actively support the State Trails Coalition, a non-partisan volunteer body that works to promote communication among trail enthusiasts, land owners/managers, and government agencies.”
- Add webinar meetings into the mix of stakeholder and manager meetings.
- Create a social media presence.

Suggested Constructive Interactions

- Share stories and common aspirations between user groups.
 - “...educating each user group on the concerns of the others and presenting ways to mitigate their impact would help.”
 - Offer in-person opportunities that bring together different user groups. “Field trips that take motorized folks and put them on a horse–hikers on a cycle or quad–motorized on foot or horseback–mix it up to build empathy. A ‘walk a mile in their boots’ approach.”
 - Joint work parties.
- Deal with mistrust, especially between users and government managers.
 - “It will be interesting to see what, if any action takes place as a result of this Town Hall input. Talk is cheap with most government programs so I will not hold my breath waiting for actionable results.”
 - Educate agency personnel by offering “...’recreation diversity’ training for fed and state employees....”
- Use the Internet and social media tools appropriately.
 - “Internet discussions probably aren’t the best way to get people with various opinions and needs to come together. That needs to happen at user group or advisory group meetings, or through projects and initiatives that bring people together face to face.”
 - “I’ve been impressed with the result of this tool [online Town Hall] actually. Distrust is a hard barrier to overcome, especially when part of it is focused on the RCO or other governmental staff themselves. Michael [the Town Hall moderator] has managed to walk a line as moderator where the fringe left and right have had to focus on issues and not people, and that’s seemed to provide good opportunities to share information. I think when the incentive is unbiased

moderation and the opportunity to be heard, that helps. It still begs the question of 'what would you get done here other than ventilating?' But this has been one good tool."

- Ensure that online tools meet the needs of participants: Set up a Google Group or similar system. Some of us older folks, yes I am one, don't like or use the newest social media systems. The younger more tech inclined folks use social media all the time. Many in the over 50 crowd don't. There is a challenge here as many of the user groups are made up of more senior folks. To me an email communication could work, but not the more social media systems.
-

Verbatim Comments from the Town Hall Web site in Response to Round 6

Beth Blay – Back Country Horsemen
bbinaz@earthlink.net
Submitted on 2013/08/02 at 3:34 pm

We share trails and we share working on them with user groups. There is conflict which results from NOT understanding the dangers of this with regard to right of way...The triangle sign explaining this should be posted at every major trailhead. Also, headphones should not be permitted to be used by any group as they render the user oblivious to fellow trail users. This can and does result in wrecks with injuries.

John
john@moosefish.com
Submitted on 2013/07/31 at 8:13 am

I think members of each user group would benefit from learning what the other groups do to support trails and outdoor recreation. Sharing stories about mountain bikers and horseback riders working on trails would help hikers recognize their contributions. Understanding how licensing fees from motorized vehicles benefit the outdoors might help nonmotorized users appreciate motorized users.

Additionally, clearly defining usage rules well before the trailhead would help prevent conflict. If a hiker was well aware that there would be motorized users on the trail they were intending to hike before they even left their home they wouldn't be surprised when they arrived.

Finally, educating each user group on the concerns of the others and presenting ways to mitigate their impact would help. If hikers knew that they should stand on the downhill side of the trail as horses pass or bikers knew they shouldn't speed around blind corners when hikers are present they'd be less likely to cause problems.

Greg Lovelady
GregL12@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/07/29 at 6:09 pm

It would be good if more people would actively support the State Trails Coalition, a non-partisan volunteer body that works to promote communication among trail enthusiasts, land owners/managers, and government agencies. This organization has been hosting state trails conferences, which is its primary mission, since 1998. I'm not sure if the success it has had would have been possible without the help it has received from the state RCO/IAC and the National Park Service. Given the large number of trail enthusiasts in Washington, I'm unsure why its conferences have been rather moderately attended, with participation averaging about 200 people from all corners of the trail world (motorized, nonmotorized, urban, back country, etc.). Even so, the success of this organization and its mission of promoting communication may do much to ensure the future of trails in this state.

darcy
djmitchem@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/29 at 5:37 pm

Field trips that take motorized folks and put them on a horse–hikers on a cycle or quad–motorized on foot or horseback–mix it up to build empathy. A “walk a mile in their boots” approach. A few events like this, along with joint work parties would really build a “trail-oriented” coalition. I would also require “recreation diversity” training for fed and state employees—they need to understand the deeply felt ownership aka. Love for different activities, not just the politically correct activities that are taught in college as green or good. Hunting, riding, biking, snowmobiling, mountain bike, 4x4, quad, orienteering, etc. All these activities need to be appreciated. A good start would be a WTA or BCH type group that advocates for all trails.

Birdie
birdied9@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/29 at 2:33 pm

This response regards the topic for discussion – better communication among users. It's important when events are scheduled that are geared to a particular group that everyone else is aware of it. A website that listed all the recreational landscapes around the state and scheduled events on each one would help. Usually these events are posted by users groups on websites that cater to their specific interest. Having a “master list” for each landscape that

covered all activities could help reduce conflict. The website could also highlight volunteer events and opportunities, offer advice about how to interact with other users and animals, etc. The site could also feature places to volunteer for national trails day and national public lands day. RCO would be a logical sponsor for the site, but a private sponsor could/might get advertising support.

Internet discussions probably aren't the best way to get people with various opinions and needs to come together. That needs to happen at user group or advisory group meetings, or through projects and initiatives that bring people together face to face.

Mike McGlenn
mike@mikemcglenn.com
Submitted on 2013/07/29 at 2:17 pm

I am a Back Country Horsemen member. Over the years we have taken part in many of these forum situations. Many have been state wide, some more regional. Some things that have worked well. Start with the basic get a group of users together for a lunch or dinner meeting. The group needs to be manageable in size and fairly represent the spectrum of users. One of the best ways to create understanding and communication is to set down and break bread together. Meet and talk with the users in a semi formal situation. Basically see that we all put one leg of the pants on at a time. The different user groups need to invite the others to come to their meetings. Invite them to make a short presentation. Get to know the people. Most of what we all do is about the personal relationships we foster with the other user groups and the agency folks.

Once you have the basic personal relationships established it is much easier to be able to use an email system to continue the dialog. Set up a Google Group or similar system. Some of us older folks, yes I am one, don't like or use the newest social media systems. The younger more tech inclined folks use social media all the time. Many in the over 50 crowd don't. There is a challenge here as many of the user groups are made up of more senior folks. To me an email communication could work, but not the more social media systems.

One of the previous commenters makes a great point. Communication has to work both ways. We the users can spot a situation quickly where the agency is simply checking the box that says we asked for outside input. We know the decision has already been made so why should we bother to respond. That position by the agency is totally unacceptable and needs to change.

Some entity that will exist over the long haul will need to be the moderator for whatever system evolves. The user groups can come and go. A government entity will be around for awhile. So the agency that is dealing with the issue will need to have a person with responsibility for maintaining the system and monitoring it. The agencies of course have no money and not much for staff, so this will be difficult, they will have to want to do it and plan for it.

The agencies need to admit they do not have the staff to get their missions accomplished anymore. They need to embrace the volunteer groups and make it easier for the volunteers to help accomplish the mission.

Keith
keithpeter@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/07/29 at 5:39 am

Please don't let one group take command of the whole thing i.e. hiking community. Allow other groups input, snowmobilers, fishermen, hunters, motorcyclists, etc

Dave Hiatt
dhiatt07@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/28 at 8:35 pm

Teaching the RCO personnel and land managers Webster's definition of compromise and insisting that all of them use the word appeasement instead of the word compromise when appropriate, would be a good place to start ensuring that communication actually occurs.

RCO staff and most land management people misuse these two words, i.e. they talk in New Speak. This is one of the root causes for the lack of communication.

Webster's definition of a compromise. That is; "a settlement in which each side makes concessions".

Compromise does not apply when the RCO/Land Managers ask us to come to the table to discuss how much we are willing to give up. The proper term for that action is appeasement.

Compromise discussions need to start from the standpoint of what new areas they are willing to open for motorized access, in exchange for closing an area currently open to motorized users.

Fix that and you will actually have communication instead of miscommunication.

It will be interesting to see what, if any action takes place as a result of this Town Hall input. Talk is cheap with most government programs so I will not hold my breath waiting for actionable results.

Byron Stuck
nmatrust@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/28 at 12:50 pm

I've been impressed with the result of this tool actually. Distrust is a hard barrier to overcome, especially when part of it is focused on the RCO or other governmental staff themselves. Michael has managed to walk a line as moderator where the fringe left and right have had to focus on issues and not people, and that's seemed to provide good opportunities to share information. I think when the incentive is unbiased moderation and the opportunity to be heard, that helps. It still begs the question of "what would you get done here other than ventilating?" But this has been one good tool. It also helps bridge the time and space continuum where it's hard to get to places or meeting times. I don't think "number of lawsuits" or "satisfaction scores" would be good measures but I appreciate the need to assess progress here.

Donna Ruelas-Semasko – Evergreen Packgoat Club/Edelweiss Acres
dsemasko@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/07/28 at 9:21 am

Would use webinar type meetings where many different trail users could sign in and listen and ask questions – would definitely have specific items to discuss each time – would invite all trail users – clubs, associations, companies, land managers, etc. Perhaps each time a different club or land manager or user association could be the "host". In between, we could all discuss things via facebook or e-mail. I believe the more we offered this type of platform the more people would join especially if we can be certain that our voice would be heard to the powers that be as concerns trails. Donna

kevin ashe
d.iga@frontier.com
Submitted on 2013/07/28 at 8:57 am

It looks like I have missed a couple opportunities to address these issues. As to this latest inquiry, let me say: of course communication is always important. And among the various user groups but the most important is communication is between the groups and those in government positions. We must let the government know that we want most all trails left open and we also need an open road to get to the trails. Like is said at the beginning, road closures mean trail closures. This is the most important communication that, at the present time, needs to be communicated. Of what real use is it to waste time talking about a few trails when the forest service wants to close 75% of the roads. I fear we have missed the main issue.

Cheryl Conklin
cherylconk@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/28 at 8:40 am

Sometimes it seems like certain user groups (i.e., hikers) are over-represented on trail committees, while others (i.e., equestrian or bikers) are not or are under-represented. (Please note that that I hike, bike and ride horses.) All types of user groups should be represented on committees and advisory boards.

These should be chaired by an unbiased employee from the agency involved.

Lloyd Gelentere
lloydkg@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/07/28 at 8:05 am

Meetings with all user trail groups together on trail maintenance and changes. Using information from this meeting before laws are passed and rules are made. For example of bad rule changes with no impute, taking culverts out of old logging roads and closing roads, Road less areas in wilderness areas, no chain saws to clear trails in wilderness areas.

Jim Harris
jimharris183@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/07/28 at 7:34 am

Most trail advocates, in my experience, love to talk about their project, and are willing to seek cooperative efforts. The challenge has been a forum to make it happen. The WTA has facilitated information distribution, but cooperative brainstorming, with an incentive to implement the outcomes, has not been strong. So here are some thoughts.

Money is always a motivator, so it would be easy to say that including collaborative efforts as scoring criteria for RCO grant programs would assist in this effort. The challenge is establishing realistic categories. Some community trails are, by location, focused on a single agency/advocate and may be very limited on user types due to safety considerations, while regional trails have the potential for coordination with other agencies and non-profit organizations working on adjacent connectors or phases of the same trail, which also provides greater opportunities to evaluate the range of multiple uses that can be accommodated. How to establish the criteria for those classes of trail and related cooperation/coordination grant scoring criteria could be lead by RCO or it could be facilitated by a collaborative effort of RCO and WTA.

There may be a better approach – grassroots, stakeholder facilitated efforts are always the best, but right now people see the value but lack the motivator to make it happen.

ROUND 7 FINDINGS

Round 7 Question

In our surveys, in this online Town Hall, and in the Advisory Groups people are telling us that funding is one of the most important issues. We would like to know your ideas for solutions.

So far, your comments seem to be split between taxes and user fees, with some people feeling that they already pay enough and some people feeling that it is worth it to pay. Still, other people feel like the money they are spending on taxes etc. should be prioritized to address more important issues than trails or that they pay enough already.

Will the funding issue get worse (or at least not get much better) or will it work itself out over time? If funding is a problem, what alternatives/solutions, in your opinion, will have both the *desired impact and be acceptable* to Washington's residents?

Summary Observations by the Blog Facilitator

In this round of discussion, 26 people commented, providing 27 comments. Below is a summary of the themes of the comments, followed by a *verbatim* reporting of all comments.

Most people responding to this Town Hall question felt that the funding issue would continue to worsen and they expressed the following concerns and ideas.

It's More Than Paying a Fee; It Is Also About Leaving a Legacy

"Our trails may have started out with funding from taxpayers, but I believe in order for any trail system to be sustained and made available for generations to come the current user needs to have a "pay it forward" mentality. If we the users don't care, why should anyone else. We have inherited a beautiful outdoor legacy in WA State thanks to the volunteers and trail users before us. Now it is our turn."

Concerns about Funding

Spending Efficiency

There are concerns about the administrative efficiency in making and allocating spending decisions, especially from NOVA stakeholders. These concerns centered on the belief that the grant application process is too complex.

- "RCO administration is eating a lion's share of the NOVA funds with their complex grant application process, which has evolved from a simple visit and recommendation of a staff person to a 2 year complexity not designed for better facilities, but to cover RCOs behind."

Discover Pass and NOVA Account Fund Allocations

"As I see it we do not have a funding problem for trails in Washington State. The problem that we have is the funds that are collected through the Discover Pass go towards maintaining State Parks and not the trail system. 84% of the money that is collected goes to [s]ate parks, 8% to

Fish and Wildlife and 8% to trails.” “I think if you use the NOVA funds as they were designed to be used, there should be enough money for trails and education and enforcements. The NOVA funds must not be used to support WA Parks operations.”

Unfair Competition

At least one private campground provider feels disadvantaged because she is required to have customers pay hotel/motel taxes while public providers are not so required.

Unnecessarily High Standards

Some contributors believe that the current construction and maintenance standards are impeding progress because meeting these standards is more expensive than is necessary for trails. Their logic is that because the work is on trails, it can proceed with different standards than for other public infrastructure projects like roads.

Multiple Permit Requirements

- Though not expressed as a funding problem, *per se*, the various government permit requirements across providers were cited as an impediment to recreation participation.
- There were calls for a simplified and unified permit structure. The goal of doing so would be to make it easy for a recreationist to meet the legal permit requirements across multiple providers.

Ideas for New Revenue Sources

Excise tax on outdoor recreation equipment. There was some interest in creating a new revenue stream through an excise tax on outdoor equipment like tents, mountain bikes, hiking boots, etc. The reference point for this recommendation is the successful use of this funding approach for fish and wildlife issues in the nation,

- “This system is already in place for hunting/fishing, and it is supported by users and has done good things. Strange that only Hunting and fishing has stepped up in this way, but not hiking, camping, and riding.”
- This support for a new tax, however, was made with conditions. Some Town Hall contributors believe there is waste in the current system of funding and their support for a new tax is conditioned on first eliminating this waste.
- Another condition users would impose is assurance that the new tax funding would be dedicated to the purpose of supporting the recreation activities that generated this new tax money.
-

Reallocate some of the existing hotel/motel taxes. A private campground owner made the point that some of the hotel/motel taxes she collects should be directed to her customer base,

- “Use or tweak existing laws in creative ways. I own a campground that caters to outdoor enthusiasts, but the hotel/motel tax I pay into only promotes city or developed tourism. The amount that campgrounds and other outdoor lodging like cabins and resorts pay in, should go to outdoor tourism items (like trails and trail promotion).”

Volunteer check boxes on vehicle license applications.

- “I know this idea has been around but I support the concept of including on our vehicle and personal license renewal forms the box to check if they wish to include \$5.00 specifically for recreational trails.”

Broaden the funding base generally by enlisting private companies.

- “Since trail use benefits the local communities and the people who use them perhaps putting in for grants from large companies could come up with extra funding. This is indeed a tough question and as a person commented already funding will continue to be challenging into the future.”

Improve and increase the use of non-staff labor sources.

- Maximize the use of volunteers. Use labor from the state’s prison population to build and maintain trails.

Raise the fuel tax cap for NOVA.

- “One effort that hopefully can gain some traction is raising the artificial lid on fuel tax for the NOVA program. Right now it is capped at 1% even though research has shown that non highway fuel use is as much as 3.5%.”

Additional Ideas and Comments

Add Trails to Transportation Development Projects

- “Convince developers to add trails to subdivisions. Incorporate trails into the transportation system and the county and regional transportation level. The DOT should play a larger role in trails. Scenic Byways should at a minimum provide easy access to nearby trails and support trailheads.”

Information Request

- “...to further this discussion, a simple chart of the current funding sources (federal, state, DP [Discover Pass], gas, volunteer) and how it is spent would be helpful.”
-

Verbatim Comments from the Town Hall Web site in Response to Round 7

John
john@moosefish.com
Submitted on 2013/08/13 at 7:41 am

The current model does not provide a consistent source of funding for the maintenance of existing trails let alone development of new trails. I favor a hybrid approach of user fees and taxes.

While a system funded only by user fees makes sense for dedicated users of the trail system, I think it places a barrier in front of the casual user. Some minimum level of service should be available to all at no cost aside from taxes.

However, a user fee should be imposed on areas of enhanced service or exceptional quality. For example, National Forests are free to use (as long as you stay away from developed sites and trailheads), but National Parks generally have an entrance fee. A Washington-based example would be the SnoPark system that has a graduated fee system based on the services provided. Care will be required to ensure the user fees are not so high as to make the fee areas accessible only by those with the means to pay them.

Regardless of the solution, it should run for five or more years at a time so administrators can plan for more than the current budget cycle.

mikef - Posted by the moderator for Joseph,
fraid@earthlink.net
Submitted on 2013/08/12 at 1:58 pm

The following comments are submitted in response to "Washington Trails Town Hall". Comments address a variety of the questions and request for comment. Throughout I will use real examples to demonstrate points and provide clarity.

I am a retired forest engineer, land surveyor and outdoor recreation specialist. An avid outdoorsman, I enjoy motorcycle trail riding, equestrian trail riding, hiking, camping, hunting, fishing and collecting rocks and minerals.

Throughout my professional career I have been very involved with trails, particularly single track motorcycle trails. I have written two books on Motorcycle Trail Location, Design, Construction, Maintenance and management. Both published by American Motorcyclist Association. I have also written articles motorcycle trail recreation which has been used in various publications. Working with the Motorcycle Industry Council and various state and federal agencies I have lectured on the subject of motorized trails and recreation all across the US.

Funding:

With most agencies of state government complaining of insufficient funding the probability of obtaining more funding for trails is indeed slim.....Unless perhaps nonmotorized trail users are finally willing to begin to pay their fair share and purchase use permits as the motorized trail community has done for over 40 years.

If funding is difficult to obtain, to be successful we must think creatively and discover how to do more with the funding we do have available

Before the recreation trail community agrees to simply "throw money at the problem" we must take a careful look at how well (or poorly) our money is managed by both the agencies that make grants for trail projects and by the agencies that receive those funds to build and maintain trails. Trail users in Washington State must demand trail providing agencies become much, much more efficient and effective in the use of public outdoor recreation trail dollars. Other states are far more efficient and effective—WA needs to catch up! (The outstanding ORV and snowmobile programs in Idaho quite literally make a disgrace of what is happening here in WA State.)

After more than 30 years of observing of land managing agencies responsible for providing trails for outdoor recreation I am lead to conclude most in this state are operating at low efficiency.... We have seen federal agencies install \$50,000 trail bridges costing more than loggers spend on bridges for heavy haul (logging traffic). That alone ought to inspire trail users to raise serious questions about how efficiently the various funds available for trails are used.

As a region forest engineer with a limited road budget I was forced to learn to be very efficient. One result was to learn to construct timber stringer bridges efficiently and to extend their useful life. I have not seen any of that technology used in recent trail construction and it should be.

Rather than start from square one RCO should begin by studying organizations in other states that build and maintain trails efficiently – and have a high degree of user satisfaction. After 35 years of riding motorized trail bikes in the state of Idaho I know they have an excellent program that puts the great majority of motorized trail money on the ground building and maintaining trails – rather than being wasted on law enforcement, administration and the like. The states of Oregon and Utah also have vigorous motorized trail construction and maintenance programs. All available evidence indicates Washington State gives motorized trail users the least value for the money. The Idaho program in particular ought to be studied in an attempt to find ways to improve the failing program(s) here in Washington.

Some characteristics of The Idaho State Parks Off-Road Motor Vehicle Recreation Program:

- Projects involving expenditure of ORV funds must have the sponsorship of 1 or more legitimate motorized trail machine clubs.
- Agencies, trail machine clubs and IDPR (Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation) work together to find and develop high quality projects that benefit motorized trail recreation....And consequently benefit nonmotorized recreationists who are also allowed to use these trails funded by OHV recreationists.
- IDPR employs 3 to 4+ highly trained and very efficient trail construction and maintenance crews. These elite trail crews are available for use on motorized projects on lands managed by agencies that provide motorized trail opportunities. Requests for crews are prioritized on a competitive basis and the trail machine community selects the successful applicants.
- IDPR also makes grants on a competitive basis to agencies for motorized trail construction and maintenance. These projects must also have the sponsorship of one or more motorized trail machine clubs.
- IDPR trail crews work long shifts of 8 ten hour days which minimizes travel costs and increases production.
- VERY IMPORTANT: Land managing agencies in Idaho work to make it as easy as possible for volunteers to contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of motorized trails. In WA state agencies require so much useless paper work, special training, so called certification and bureaucratic monkey motion that volunteer efforts are successfully discouraged.

RCO should require grant recipients of trail construction and maintenance funds leave no stone unturned in an effort to make it as easy as possible for volunteers to contribute their labor. Agencies need to publish specifications for maintenance work and let the recreating public get the work done instead on talking them to death and burying projects in paper work.

On a recent vacation in Idaho I talked with USFS employees on two separate occasions who spoke of how pleased they were with the outstanding efforts of Motorized trail machine users in maintaining and improving trails on an informal basis and then reporting results to the agency. No sign of the discouraging attitudes we get from USFS in WA State.

One USFS person in Idaho person described an instance where 20+ riders from a trail machine club of had spent an entire day reinstalling a culvert taken out by flash flood. In another instance an agency employee told me that due to the maintenance work of trail machine clubs his district had completed all of their planned maintenance work by the end of July and were working on major trail improvements that they had been wanting to accomplish for several years. Wouldn't it be great to see some of that attitude and the success that goes with it in WA State!

Referring back to the study on ORV recreation conducted by Dr. A.E. Keir Nash for IAC over 35 years ago one will discover a very large portion of the ORV user population are skilled tradesmen and professional engineers. The ability of these recreationists to undertake and complete trail building and maintenance projects and trails is impressive. An example from personal experience: When I was an outdoor recreation specialist I worked with volunteers from a trail machine bike club and completely constructed a 40 foot log stringer trail bridge in a single weekend. Trees were felled for stringers and bark peeled, sills laid, stringers winched into place and pinned, cedar decking split and spiked in place. Shear rails cut and bolted down and bridge ready for use. Cost to the agency no more than a few dollars for pins and spikes. Compare this to the \$50,000 trail bridges the federal government builds and in the process wastes scarce trail funds.

The failure of agencies to utilize the potential of the ORV community for trail construction and maintenance is an unacceptable situation that needs correcting.

PERHAPS THE REAL PROBLEM IS THAT WE DON'T REALLY NEED MORE MONEY FOR TRAILS – WE JUST NEED TO USE WHAT WE HAVE MUCH MORE EFFECTIVELY.

Another way to put more trail money on the ground is to make major reductions in expenditures that don't directly increase the maintenance work accomplished or construction of additional trail miles on the ground. Make major

reduction in expenditures for administration and law enforcement. Limit grants for law enforcement to no more than 2% of NOVA funds and limit law enforce expenditures to weekends and holidays May through October.

Efficiency and effectiveness in trail construction, maintenance, and management.

The costs of constructing maintaining and managing trails are influenced by large number of variables, many of which are routinely ignored. This is a complex subject and one can only touch on the issues in a short letter. For an agency to provide an effective program much careful thought must be given to a wide variety of issues. I will only touch on this subject as it is quite complicated and a discussion could fill a book.

To give an example: I recently reviewed a newly constructed trail that had been located and constructed by contract. Much of the trail was located on a steep, dry south facing slope. The high, steep cut slopes were already beginning to ravel and erode. The trail could be seen from some distance, due to being located in the open. With a lack of adequate moisture on the south facing slope it is unlikely that the cut and fill slopes will re-vegetate. It would have been a simple matter to locate the trail in timber on the north side of the ridge. Neither the contractor nor the agency recognized the problems they were creating.

Switchbacks improperly located, designed and constructed become trail structures frequently expensive to maintain or fail.

An example in WA State: The responsible agency chose an employee to locate a new trail whose only qualification was "he rides a trail bike so he ought to be able to locate a trail bike trail". I did not view the trail until well after construction had been completed. By that time improperly located and constructed switchbacks were already beginning to fail; portions of the trail were located on overly steep slopes and cut slopes were raveling; steep grades and inadequate drainage were causing ruts to develop. None of this should have happened and could have been avoided by a competent trail locator. Trails must be located, designed and constructed with a great deal of thought given to building a structure that will not be expensive to maintain.

RCW 46.09 the WA off-road and nonhighway vehicle act.

It must be pointed out that RCW 46.09 came about solely through the actions of off-road vehicle enthusiasts who addressed their legislators and petitioned them to enact legislation that would (1) rescind the right to receive a rebate on the state tax on fuel used off-road for ORV recreation and (2) Require a permit and impose a fee on vehicles used for said recreation and (3) make those funds available to agencies of state, local and federal government to construct and maintain trails for ORV recreation. Thanks to the generosity and sense of fairness of the ORV community they have never asked that nonmotorized recreationists be prohibited from sharing in the use of facilities OHV use paid for. To thank motorized users for their generosity there are unfortunately some very vocal members of the nonmotorized community who have deliberately and routinely subjected motorized users to bigotry, prejudice, malicious discrimination and hate speech. This problem is in dire need of resolution.

Allowing funds generated by ORV recreation to be used for any exclusively non- motorized uses is nothing less than fraud and theft.

The issue of contribution to NOVA funding by recreation group-

NOVA funds are derived from (1) The state tax on fuel consumed by vehicles traveling off-road and on trails and nonhighway roads, (2) ORV permit fees that are paid exclusively by ORV recreationists.

- A family of equestrian enthusiasts pulling a loaded horse trailer with a pickup truck loaded with a camper begin to make a contribution when wheels make contact with the surface of a nonhighway road. The contribution derives from the state tax on the fuel consumed traveling on the nonhighway road. The contribution is significant as the tow vehicle is large, heavy and rarely fuel efficient. The contribution ends when the equestrian ends the nonhighway road travel and returns to the county road, state highway etc. It matters not what the pickup, horse trailer, horse feed, saddles cost as none of these expenditures contribute a single penny to funding trails.
- A family of ORV enthusiasts typically pulls a travel trailer behind a large heavy pickup loaded with motorized trail machines. The contribution of fuel tax revenue from fuel consumed by the tow vehicle is significant and similar to that of the equestrian; however the ORV enthusiast then unloads motorized trail machines for each member of the family and continues to consume fuel for the duration of the trip. Other things being equal the ORV enthusiast's contribution in fuel tax exceeds that of the equestrians. In addition however, the ORV enthusiast family must pay an additional fee for an "ORV permit" for each of their trail machines. (It should be clear that OHV enthusiasts contribute more revenue to trail maintenance and construction than any other trail using group.
- A group of hikers travel in their Subaru for few days of hiking. In their fuel efficient vehicle they contribute little in the way of fuel tax that supports the NOVA fund and nothing for permit fees.

In conclusion ORV and equestrian enthusiasts are carrying a majority of the burden for funding the NOVA program while hikers and similar recreationists contribute little.

The utterly gut wrenching, disgusting reality of the situation is that those who contribute the most to the program receive the very, very, very least in return.....RCO and certain other agencies of government appear quite content to allow this state of affairs to continue. Somehow, someone needs to summon the courage, the ethics and honesty to bring this disgraceful situation to a just resolution!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Trail wear, degradation, sediment delivery, horse manure, and water quality

The typical reaction to issues of trail wear, degradation and sediment delivery is to blame Off-road Vehicles and ignore all else. That answer is neat, simple and wrong (and often tinged with anti- motorized bias and more than a little bigotry). Incompetent location, design, construction and maintenance coupled with inadequate miles of trail system for the motorized trail user population has much more to do with the problem than the type of trail user.

At least two researchers have addressed the problem of trail wear, degradation and sediment delivery. In a study comparing the erosion impacts of horses, hikers, bicycles and motorcycles, the sediment yields from horse trails were greater than any other type of use. (Seney and Wilson 1991). Harrison in another study reached the same conclusion. Wilson and Seney in a 1994 study in Gallatin National Forest found that users on foot (hikers and horses) make more sediment available than do users on wheels (mountain bikes and motorcycles).

Hammit and Cole in a 1987 study found that excessive amounts of horse manure pose a threat to water quality.

It is clear that ORV recreationists have frequently been blamed for problems that are more attributable to other users. This in no way indicates equestrian recreationists should be subjected to the bigotry and bias that has befallen trail machine enthusiasts.....It very strongly suggest state and federal government agencies responsible for funding, building maintaining, managing and providing recreation trails have to date done a truly biased and incompetent job. Instead of blaming recreationists certain government agencies need to clean up their act!!

The need for additional miles of ORV trail

According to a USFS study published in 2005 titled "Off-Highway vehicle recreation in the United States, Regions and States: A National Report from the National Survey on Recreation and The Environment (NSRE)." In 1960 when the first National Recreation Survey was done for the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, Off-Highway motorized recreation was not even on the radar as a recreational activity... "OHV use is now widely recognized as one of the fastest growing outdoor activities." The study goes on to say that driving vehicles off-road became one of the fastest growing activities between 1982 and 2001. According to the study the number of OHV participants grew from 36 million in 1999-2000 to 51 million in 2003-2004.

The rapid growth of this recreation has little abated since 2003-2004. In the 4 year period growth averaged 3.75 million participants per year.

Facing trail recreation today is a situation of far, far too few miles of trail for a growing number of Americans who find this fascinating recreation meets their need for outdoor trail activity better than any other. The problem is one of State and Federal government land managing and funding agencies miserably failing to meet the outdoor recreation trail needs of this large and growing segment of American outdoor recreationists.

The same thing happens to ORV trails as happens to forest roads: as the traffic load increases so does wear on the facility increase. ORV traffic needs to be spread over a much larger trail system. As pointed out above the amount of wear per trail traveler is greater for equestrian use HOWEVER equestrian and foot travelers have an impossibly huge mileage of trails over which their use is spread out. In addition since nonmotorized travelers may travel cross country and are not confined to designate routes as are OHV recreationists, nonmotorized travelers have a virtually infinite number of routes and miles available to them.

There are so few trails available for ORV use in Washington State and so many OHV recreationists that trails wear out from heavy use and lack of proper maintenance.

THE SINGLE GREATEST NEED IN TRAIL BASED RECREATION IN WASHINGTON STATE TODAY IS FOR LARGE INCREASES IN ORV TRAIL MILEAGE. THIS IS WHERE THE GREAT MAJORITY OF AVAILABLE TRAIL FUNDS SHOULD BE EXPENDED.

What can be done enhance cooperation among the various trail user groups?

As one who enjoys both riding and packing horses and riding trail motorcycles I have encountered more problems with hikers while on the trail than with any other group. Every time I have encountered motorcycles while horseback they have pulled over, shut off their engines and talked to us. Every time I have encountered folks on horses while motorcycle trail riding they have courteously thanked us for pulling over and talking so the horses would know what we are.

One thing about encountering motorcycles when on horseback – you can hear them coming and prepare. When bicycles come flying around a blind corner it can create a problem. We need to give a lot of thought to this issue and not just lock others out as some hikers like to do. We are all American citizens and EVERYONE has an equal right to high quality trail recreation.

I have had hikers hide in the brush when we approached on horses then one of them moved when we were right next to them. The mustang I was riding did not take well to the situation as one would expect. All the hikers needed to do was get off on the downhill side of the trail and talk as we approached. Have also had problems with hikers and dogs when on horseback.

The big problem is that there are all too many hikers who simply do not respect other trail users. They whine and snivel about horse manure on the trails, they don't like to encounter people on mountain bikes and complain about noise from motorcycles- even though there has been a huge amount of reduction in motorcycle sound emissions compared to even 10 years ago.

A big step in the right direction would be for funding and land managing agencies to stop acquiescing to the trash talk and hate speech by certain hikers. Certain of the publications some hikers read rivals that of hate groups of the past.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment

Sandy Sternod, VP WA State Snowmobile Association 2013-14
ssternod@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/08/11 at 1:10 pm

As a winter recreationist having been involved with State Parks Winter Recreation Program on both the nonmotorized and motorized advisory committees as representative for 12 years, and a member of the WA State Snowmobile Association for over 20 years, I believe it is essential for users to pay a fee to support whatever trail system they are using. Our trails may have started out with funding from taxpayers, but I believe in order for any trail system to be sustained and made available for generations to come the current user needs to have a "pay it forward" mentality. If we the users don't care, why should anyone else. We have inherited a beautiful outdoor legacy in WA State thanks to the volunteers and trail users before us. Now it is our turn.

Snowmobilers pay dedicated fees to support their program directly. They have an annual budget that they live within and thousands of hours of volunteer time year round to keep this winter recreation activity available for families.

I believe that the RCO continues to be relevant, and that they are continually re-evaluating how to better serve the outdoor recreation committee by making those that are asking for funds are thoughtful and specific about funding needs when asking for a grant. Yes, this can be an onerous task, but it is necessary to ensure that these funds are not wasted on frivolous ideas. I am part of scoring committee and know how tedious it can be review all the grants that are presented, but I appreciate reading about grants that provide necessary funding for maintenance and continued longevity. In addition to user fees, grant funds continue to be essential to maintain trail maintenance for the future.

Larry Beardslee TCMRA NCATV BCHW
larry__beardslee@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/08/10 at 7:21 am

RCO administration is eating a lion's share of the NOVA funds with their complex grant application process, which has evolved from a simple visit and recommendation of a staff person to a 2 year complexity not designed for better facilities, but to cover RCO's behind.

darcy
djmitchem@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/08/08 at 9:19 am

One more thing...

Concerning #4 above, I also do not think it is fair that as a Private campground owner I must collect hotel/motel tax, but public campgrounds do not. If they had to pay into the fund like me, that could provide more funding for outdoor rec. facilities and promotion.

darcy
djmitchem@hotmail.com

Submitted on 2013/08/08 at 9:06 am

1) Optimize the dollars you already have on the ground.

As a volunteer I recently applied for/received an RCO grant. We are used to doing things cheaply and quickly. The waste in that system is absurd—multi-page applications, hours of office work, presentations, tracking, reviews, ADA everything, paved everything etc. Those hours at the computer should be buying bridges instead. Why do DNR/WDFW/USFS/Parks even need to jump through these hoops for MAINTENANCE funds? If we can't trust them to prioritize trails internally, then incompetent people are in the jobs. Just give them their % and put the funds on the ground! Use Best management instead of individual EA's, SEPA's, NEPA's, HPA's, FPA's. All this paper wastes our money and doesn't fix trails. I'm just familiar with one program, but most government projects are run this way—study two years for two weeks of actual work. Lower the standards—these are trails not roads. There are ways around the bid laws, prevailing wage, volunteer limitations, but we may need legislative fixes for some of this waste. One way is to set up non-profits for volunteer labor, and use public funds for supplies. Every charity that calls me looking for a donation, I always ask what % goes “on the ground”—has anyone asked that of our trail funding? Audit the whole system with the goal of putting funds on the ground ASAP.

2) The Discover Pass is hideous. It is an ok idea gone rogue. The result is similar to poaching ORV funds for state parks. Hunters/horseback/motorized/bike are subsidizing state parks that limit those uses. Such an unfair approach will never get support. The “hassle factor” is the next biggest problem. Adding to the confusion is the Federal pass system, and now each private timber company is getting into the fee game. I would support more general fund fees for state parks (to compensate for the habitat/historic/ecological uses of state parks that benefit everyone in the state). Revamp the DP—a license plate sticker good for 5 years, or an upgraded license plate and it covers EVERYONE and EVERYTHING. Something you don't have to think about each time you leave for the woods. Keep State park entrance fee if you want, but not for DNR/WDFW. If you must keep it, promote it as a positive marketing and tourism tool (buy a DP get discounts, coupons, free coffee at local shops, etc.) But if it is tossed out all together, I would celebrate.

3) AFTER the waste is fixed (and only after that), I would support an excise tax on outdoor equipment like tents, mtn. bikes, hiking boots at the federal level. But the funds need to be watchdogged carefully. This system is already in place for hunting/fishing, and it is supported by users and has done good things. Strange that only hunting and fishing has stepped up in this way, but not hiking, camping, and riding. It might even work in-state because we have many passionate outdoor folks. Maybe a voluntary campaign such as for every pair of boots, donate a dollar for trails. We have the big outdoor retailers here (REI, Cabelas, etc.) get them on board. Safeway is always doing this type of charity work at checkout.

4) Use or tweak existing laws in creative ways.

I own a campground that caters to outdoor enthusiasts, but the hotel/motel tax I pay into only promotes city or developed tourism. The amount that campgrounds and other outdoor lodging like cabins and resorts pay in, should go to outdoor tourism items (like trails and trail promotion). Timber companies are now charging for access their land. They are now essentially large private “resorts” and should pay into the same funds as other resorts. That money should be used to improve recreation on public lands. Metropolitan Park Districts and other special purpose districts should be used to fund more local neighborhood trails. In my county, the road dept. was using gas funds for trails to simply widen the shoulder of county roads. Our parks director convinced him to put those dollars into real trails—now that fund has \$350,000 just waiting to be used on neighborhood trails that connect. Convince developers to add trails to subdivisions. Incorporate trails into the transportation system and the county and regional transportation level. The DOT should play a larger role in trails. Scenic Byways should at a minimum provide easy access to nearby trails and support trailheads.

5) Re-visit the whole NOVA issue. As we have seen there is a huge amount of angst over this fund between groups. Take another look at it and push the legislature to optimize and streamline this fund for ALL trails.

6) REQUEST: to further this discussion, a simple chart of the current funding sources (federal, state, DP, gas, volunteer) and how it is spent would be helpful.

Scott Chezick
schezick@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/08/07 at 8:56 pm

I have anywhere from three to four ORV's that I pay for tabs on each year. I wouldn't have a problem with the \$120 or so I spend a year if I felt like ORV users were getting a fair shake. I would gladly pay double if I knew that each dollar I spent was being responsibly used with a genuine goal of providing the only thing off-road riders really want – More places to ride. Living in Western Washington I am lucky that I happen to live near Walker Valley and only have to

drive a little over an hour. I would be curious to know if any of the sales tax generated from the sale of ORV's is allocated to supporting ORV activities.

Ron Tennyson
ronsyellowyj@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/08/07 at 7:41 am

As I see it we do not have a funding problem for trails in Washington State. The problem that we have is the funds that are collected through the Discover Pass go towards maintaining State Parks and not the trail system. 84% of the money that is collected goes to state parks, 8% to Fish and Wildlife and 8% to trails. If State Parks needs to maintain their parks then let them place user fees at the gate when people enter the park.

ORV tabs should be used to support recreation on state lands as well as money collected for the NOVA fund. Make our state representative's use the money as it was designed instead of raiding the funds to pay for more of their pet projects. The theft of the NOVA funds is a perfect example of why we cannot trust our state elected officials to wisely use money that we give them.

I would support a program were off-road vehicle users paid for ORV tabs if 100% of the money went to support off-road vehicle activities. Let hikers pay their fee supporting hiking trails, Horsemen pay fees to support their sport and so on. I would also require that the NOVA funds be used as they were intended and the Discover Pass program was shared fairly among the groups or better yet it the program died and went away.

As I see it off-roaders pay a lot more in taxes for their sport that do hikers. We have to pay for the registration on the vehicle either license tabs or ORV tabs. We also have tow vehicles and campers or RV's that we pay the tax on. We pay to stay in state and federal parks as well as private campgrounds that pay their taxes. We buy fuel, food, parts and everything else that is involved with our sport and there are taxes on these items.

I think we are paying our fair share now lets see some benefit from it.

Chris Marsh
thehouseofccccc@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 8:51 pm

I feel that we pay more than enough for the lack of trails for ORV use. The more fees you charge, the more you turn these activities into a higher income elitists sport. Thus creating more and more illegal trails and trespassing because the lower income people or individuals trying to get into the sport can't afford to play. I totally agree that the other user groups should pay license fees as well as the ORV users. What I don't like is that if I have a street legal vehicle that I am charged triple almost to use it on public lands. Quit supplying subsidies to businesses and other special user groups, use the monies that we pay to come back to us and the activities that we chose to do. Keep it cheap, keep it simple, and everyone will be happy.

Beth Blay – Back Country Horsemen
bbinaz@earthlink.net
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 1:56 pm

I know this idea has been around but I support the concept of including on our vehicle and personal license renewal forms the box to check if they wish to include \$5.00 specifically for recreational trails.

Don Larson
larson_don@hotmail.com
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 1:39 pm

Require license tabs /stickers on MTB's, Horses and Hiking Boots. The funding can go directly to NOVA after the DOL gets their cut....

You'll still need a Disco Pass to park at the trailhead but hey.... welcome to my world.

Kathryn Longfellow
klongfellow@frontier.com
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 12:35 pm

Funding is always a concern for maintenance and improvement of any project. I think the trail system is very vital for the health of our community and that it needs to be enticing to use and explore for all members of the community

whether young or old, temporarily able or disabled. I think that a board tax base would be the best approach as I think user fees for trail use would be hard to enforce and would be discouraging for a novice trail walker.

Kevin McGrath
reliable.kevin@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 10:28 am

Funding will continue to deteriorate as long as the originally intended funds continue to be siphoned off. Like a bucket full of holes, the more you pour in, the higher water level simply means more holes for water to flow out. The only long term solution is to patch the holes, one step at a time, faster than new ones are created.

Along with education, infrastructure and protection; recreation (including trails) are the basic tenants for which our tax collections were authorized and intended. Our sales, fuel and property taxes provided ample funding for these purposes prior to the addition of outlandish social and environmental programs added in recent decades. Active pruning of these programs is the only way to restore proper funding for basic government services (including recreation) because no amount of funding can ever satisfy the appetite for social/environmental engineering.

If you want proper funding for things that matter, vote out the social/environmental meddlers and replace them with plain spoken people who are committed to simplify, prioritize and eliminate. Start fixing holes at the bottom of the bucket and work your way up. Otherwise there's no water at the bottom in a drought.

Donna Ruelas-Semasko
dsemasko@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 10:19 am

As trails are designated for different users, could it be possible to entice those particular users to pay user fees? Stock trails where horses are used are more expensive to keep up than hiker trails; those trails where we use our packgoats are also stock trails but our stock adds nothing to the detriment of the trail; mountain bike user trails are also expensive to keep up. Designating trails by users and charging accordingly may help but those of us trail users should not bear the brunt of the funding. Since trail use benefits the local communities and the people who use them perhaps putting in for grants from large companies could come up with extra funding. This is indeed a tough question and as a person commented already funding will continue to be challenging into the future.

Al Brown
al@yakimagreenway.org
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 10:15 am

As the Executive Director of a small non-profit, I manage a 3 passive use parks, 15 mile-long urban trail system with 8 paved trailheads, two playgrounds, two boat launches and several fishing ponds. We take care of all of this without any government level support. When we build new things, local government has stepped in to sponsor grants that we do not qualify for, but we raise the local match as needed. We do not have a fee to use system, so all of it is open to the public without charge. It takes an effort for us to raise all of the funds necessary from the local community, but we have been doing this for some time. A large part of the community does not realize that we are not government funded. They believe their taxes pay for what we do, but the segment of the community that knows we are not subsidized by public funds has responded in a huge way in both direct financial support and fundraising events. The community also supports us with a huge volunteer effort. In such a small organization, we dedicate nearly one full-time person to manage volunteers. This allows us to leverage every hard dollar we receive. Any new taxes or fees imposed by government could have a negative impact on our ability to generate the funds to take care of all that we do and should be clearly thought out before implementation. Local, State and Federal regulation should help us do the job we do, rather than hinder our abilities.

In short, maybe it's time to consider alternatives to taxes and fees, as both have inherent drawbacks.

Shane Donogh
shanedonogh@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 9:52 am

1. Currently I have 3 discover passes, 4 ORV tabs, and 1 Northwest Forest Pass. I am thoroughly confused on where I will need which pass in the state of Washington. Please simplify this process. Also, a very small percentage of the money I spent on those passes will go to Off Highway Vehicle trails, where I spend most of my time.

2. Enforcement and patrols on our public and private forest land should be a much bigger priority. One of the reasons why Reiter and other places get shut down was because DNR never patrolled or enforced anything, and I have heard

the reason for that was lack of funds. Patrols and enforcement can be expensive (that is why there are so many darn yellow gates up these days, the cheapest form of enforcement is exclusion), but I personally say that is an expense I would pay for if it helps keep more trails and roads open in our PUBLIC forests. We can all help this process by reporting trash dumping, stolen vehicles, meth labs, and other illegal activities to proper authorities/land managers.

3. Don't waste money on bringing in unnecessary outside materials for building trails and engineered bridges. The majority of trails can be made and maintained using the resources of the land and with volunteer work hours, like it has been done for decades.

Tom
washelk18@yahoo.com
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 9:20 am

I don't believe trails should have any sort of fee structure for maintenance or use. I think our prison population should be employed to maintain and construct the necessary trail infrastructure. Give them something to do. I am ok with the Northwest forest pass. They seem to be using those funds wisely.

Keith Birkhofer
keith.birkhofer@vsi.cc
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 9:15 am

User fees are the perfect solution to funding "problems". Why should a non-user pay for something they never use? Maybe we have a spending problem, rather than a funding problem.

Tootie Crowson
crowson2@comcast.net
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 8:59 am

Isn't NOVA the funding mechanism? And then there is the Discover Pass. I for one am really tired of all the fees and taxes being leveled on us. BCHW and other groups work to maintain the trails. Besides these three things, what else is needed?

John Keates
keates3@msn.com
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 8:37 am

I don't see the funding situation getting better unless some type of action is taken in the near future. Just last week I was receiving more e-mails about certain members of Congress wanting to eliminate the Recreation Trails Program (RTP). RTP is a huge contributor to our trail maintenance for motorized and nonmotorized recreation in our state. User fees are already being levied to use state and federal land via a forest pass, discover pass or ORV tags. One effort that hopefully can gain some traction is raising the artificial lid on fuel tax for the NOVA program. Right now it is capped at 1% even though research has shown that non highway fuel use is as much as 3.5%. This is one specific funding measure that trails enthusiasts could support to bring in additional dollars. Raising the cap is been proposed but so far the legislature has not supports a Bill to address this.

William
reson46@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/08/06 at 7:33 am

If the legislature would not steal money from dedicated funds, like NOVA, there would be no funding problems. I do not support any additional taxes or user fees. The state has proven they can't be trusted with their existing funding. Who in their right mind would support giving them more? When they do create a user fee system, like the Discover Pass abomination, it becomes a system that forces DNR and DFW users to subsidize state parks that they do not even use! Plus they make it as difficult and confusing to use as possible.

Dave Hiatt
wohva.org x
dhiatt07@gmail.com
Submitted on 2013/08/05 at 8:22 pm

See my prior comments regarding NOVA only being the 1% of the gas tax attributable to off-road vehicles and strongly suggesting the RCO educate the legislature that in the 1970's there was an additional 3.5% of the gas taxes attributable to nonhighway road use.

Then get the legislature to properly apportion that other 3.5% of the gas tax for NON Off-road Vehicle use. The NON ORV recreational money pot would have money to burn if the RCO did this.

Return NOVA (Nonhighway Off-Road Vehicle Activities) funds to where they belong, i.e. to only the ORV users it was intended for (they are the only ones who have given up their personal WA State Constitutional Right to a refund) and remove the phony cap that currently puts their amount way below 1% of the gas tax so they get their full 1% of the gas tax. See the recent JLARC report stating the current cap is improper and should be rectified.

The RCO could accomplish this education of the legislature if they so desired. After all the IAC was the agency that assisted the nonmotorized users in their theft of the ORV funds some years ago. Therefore, the RCO should rectify that action by educating the legislature as to what the IAC did in the past and give NOVA back to the ORV users.

Anything less just adds justification for citizen mistrust of government and their refusal to ever support providing money to government for anything given government's proven record of abusing prior trust placed in them. Once burned, twice learned and we will NOT forgive nor forget!

SquakMtn

john-traeger@comcast.net

Submitted on 2013/08/05 at 6:13 pm

There is no doubt the current funding model is broken. One of the primary problems with taxpayers these days is they demand some kind of immediate and personal benefit from any tax or fee they pay. What they are missing is all of the indirect benefits of taxes that support sustainable trail systems; economic growth for local communities, lower healthcare costs for society due to a more active population, regions and the state attracting industries and companies due to a healthy and accessible outdoor environment. It is very hard to quantify these benefits, especially in short term dollars. Yet ignoring them results in a slow decent into economic irrelevancy and environmental decay.

This means that until the taxpayer mentality changes, the funding issue will become worse. User fees will never capture the total revenues needed, as they can only be raised so far before people lose interest and total revenues actually drop. Unfortunately for the current users, the economy, and the environment, it doesn't appear the change will come anytime soon.

Gelentere

lloydkgh@gmail.com

Submitted on 2013/08/05 at 6:00 pm

Go back to logging for funding trails. The forests are in horrible shape and need to be thinned to promote tree growth. Let cattle and sheep graze on state and federal land as a source of revenue. If the forest were cleaned up high temperature forest fires would be reduced saving money on fighting forest fires. Go back to hiring forester instead of recreation planners to accomplish the above.

Scott Thomas

scottryanthomas@hotmail.com

Submitted on 2013/08/05 at 4:51 pm

Trail systems are multi-generational serving people in all ages, stages and abilities in life, so they are among the most important issues any level of government should address and are worthy of financial support. Even so, funding for all public programs will be challenging well into the future as we continue to experience funding constraints from all sources. It seems to me that user fees tend to limit access and provide inadequate funding for maintenance, much less development of public facilities. As such, we should pursue broad tax sources generated by the whole community as the benefits (such as health) accrue to the whole community, whether an individual uses the trail system or not.

Chris Searcy

chris_searcy@comcast.net

Submitted on 2013/08/05 at 4:23 pm

Prioritize tax revenue on trails and other linear facilities that promote a healthy, active lifestyle. User fees should be used more for distinct, destination-type facilities such as state parks, boat launches, ORV parks, etc. that are more logistically feasible for collecting user fees.

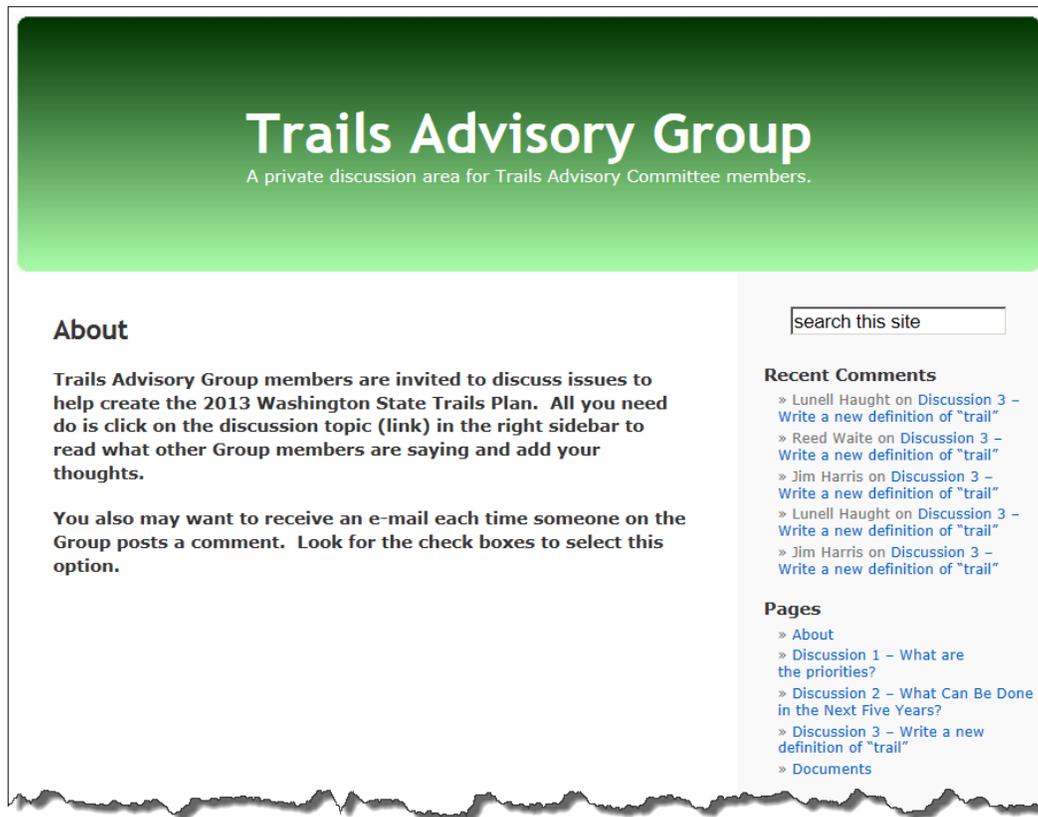
Herb Gerhardt
hgerhardt@wavecable.com
Submitted on 2013/08/05 at 4:20 pm

I think if you use the NOVA funds as they were designed to be used, there should be enough money for trails and education and enforcements. The NOVA funds must not be used to support WA Parks operations. I would presume that NOVA funding is increasing yearly since there is more and more outdoor nonhighway recreation.

TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT

INTRODUCTION

A key participant in the re-writing of the Washington Trails Plan was the Trails Advisory Committee. This group of knowledgeable stakeholders was engaged in several rounds of discussion over the Internet using a 'blog' Web site (see landing page, below).



These online discussions promoted dialog on several issues that was used to construct research components supporting the development of the *2013-2018 Washington State Trails Plan*. This Advisory Committee was made up of the members of the several Standing Committees that assist the Recreation and Conservation Office with policy development and funding allocations on trails and NOVA issues and other informed stakeholders. The Committee included 40 members.

Participants from the RCO's standing Recreational Trails Program Advisory Committee

Doug	Conner	Eastern Washington Dirt Riders
Brian	Crowley	Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance
Kevin	Farrell	Washington State Department of Ecology

Nikki	Fields	Washington State Parks
Durlyn	Finnie	Recreational Trails Program Advisory Committee
Gerry	Hodge	Washington Water Trails Association
Ted	Jackson	Recreational Trails Program Advisory Committee
Michael	Jones	City of Blaine
John	Keates	Mason County
Kristen	Kuykendall	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Ian	Macek	Washington Department of Transportation
David	McMains	Pacific Northwest Four Wheel Drive Association
Gary	Paull	U.S. Forest Service
Sandy	Sternod	Washington State Snowmobile Association
Patricia	Wible	Recreational Trails Program Advisory Committee
Participants from the RCO's standing Washington Wildlife Recreation Program Trails Advisory Committee		
Dave	Bryant	Richland Parks and Recreation
Tom	Eksten	Bothell Resident
Roger	Giebelhaus	Thurston County
Jim	Harris	Washington Wildlife Recreation Program Trails Advisory Com.
Ray	Heit	Chelan County Public Utility District
Frana	Milan	King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Michael	O'Malley	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Chris	Parsons	Washington State Parks
Kate	Schneider	Parametrix, Inc.
Tim	Wahl	Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department
Other Participants		
Linda	Berry-Maraist	North Kitsap Trails Association
John	Bottelli	Spokane County Parks and Recreation
Brad	Cownover	U.S. Forest Service
Karen	Daubert	Washington Trails Association
Buzz	Grant	Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition
Jonathan	Guzzo	Washington Trails Association
Lunell	Haught	Inland Northwest Trails Coalition
Jon	Knechtel	Pacific Northwest Trail Association
Brit	Kramer	Washington Recreation and Park Association
Kathy	Kravitt-Smith	Pierce County
Jeff	Lambert	Spokane Mountaineers
Jon	Paulson	Mountains to Sound Greenway
Ed	Spilker	Washington Department of Transportation
Renee	Tkach	Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Reed	Waite	Washington Water Trails Association

FINDINGS FROM DISCUSSION 1

Discussion 1: What are the most important priorities for improving backcountry trail recreation over the next five years?

Dave Bryant:

Assurance that all new trails that are constructed meet the minimum ADA-ABA accessibility standards. Specifically those receiving any state funding assistance.

kate schneider:

I think funding for maintaining trails and trailheads is critical. I also think supporting outreach and posting signage are important in increasing usership.

Nikki Fields:

I think we're at the point where we are losing backcountry trails due to lack of maintenance, so finding a way to maintain what we have is key. I sat on the RTP advisory committee, and there were about 80 projects, all seeking funding to maintain hundreds of miles of trails on Forest Service land, and all saying that their maintenance backlog was immense. And what happens to all the projects that didn't get funding? It would be much better if there were some kind of secure funding for that kind of necessary maintenance, so that the grant program could focus more on system improvements.

Also, I work for State Parks, and while backcountry trails aren't our main focus, most of our parks are too far away from urban areas for them to be competitive for WWRP Trails grants. So when we want to develop new trails, it seems like our projects fall through the cracks. The NOVA and RTP programs can really only fund small projects, and State Park trails don't usually compete well in WWRP-Trails. So we're left with really important projects sitting around for years while we seek funding.

Gerry Hodge:

I hate myself for being non-committal, but intelligent balance is what we should continue to strive for. There are legitimate needs for all groups: motorized, nonmotorized, water, backcountry, midcountry, close to home, winter, etc. Hopefully updating the trails plan includes evaluating the actual usage patterns so monies can be smartly applied. I also like the timeline of 5 years in the question as we shouldn't wait 22 years to evaluate usage changes.

Jim Harris:

It is easy to understand the need for more trail maintenance and new trails of many types, shared, dedicated, motorized, nonmotorized. There is a willingness and a desire, but dollars are always the limiting factor, (even over restrictive permitting can be overcome if you have the funds for mitigation).

Sources of funding outside tax dollars are going to be the new horizon. How does that saying go, about doing it the same way, over and over, and expecting different results?

Corporate Washington benefits from trails. Quality-of-life for corporate executives is a factor in where they locate. It is also a factor in employee recruitment and productivity. So those that don't even have a connection to outdoor recreationists, as consumers, benefit from trails.

If government agencies approach corporate funding, they corporate response is "your government, funded from taxes we pay, don't ask us for financial assistance. But well organized non-profits can be successful in this arena, i.e. Mountains to Sound Greenway.

How can government agencies assist in organizing and coordinating trail users, creating project specific support groups and training them on how to involve corporate support in the project? Not just asking for money, but involving them in the visioning and decision making.

There is also a need to work with the legislature to create environmental protection laws that recognize that trails and outdoor recreation are of value to the environment. Currently projects improving the quality-of-life for humans face the same restrictive requirements as business and residential development.

Nikki Fields:

Well said, Jim.

Ian Macek:

I would agree that funding for maintaining the system is needed.

I think another priority should be access to backcountry trails and trailheads. Can they be accessed by bicycle or transit, or can folks only access them by using a personal vehicle? Identifying key trails, trailheads, and sites where one doesn't need a motor vehicle to access may open up the backcountry to a new user group.

Reed Waite:

Definitions? What is backcountry trail recreation? My quick Googling came up with these thought-provoking hits:

'A backcountry area in general terms is a geographical region that is:

- isolated
- remote
- undeveloped
- difficult to access
- The term may apply to various regions that are reasonably close to urban areas but are:
- not immediately accessible by car
- at relatively high altitude
- not generally frequented by human visitors
- limited to human-powered vehicles

While the term "backcountry" is roughly comparable to the term "wilderness", they are not necessarily equivalent. "Wilderness" implies more the condition, whereas "backcountry" implies more the position. Backcountry is similar to hinterland.

There is some debate about the accessibility of people by means other than human power. While wilderness is a state of mind that implies pristine and untouched landscapes, backcountry serves as areas of land explored exclusively by human power. Wilderness exists in many places, including the backcountry.

The backcountry contains many hazards including rough terrain, life-threatening weather, avalanches and wild animals.[1] Tragic accidents and dramatic backcountry rescues of stranded hikers, climbers or skiers are a staple of news reporting.[2] Some jurisdictions have discussed placing limits on human access to the backcountry during times of particular danger.[3]

A more well-known, Australian term is "outback" or in some countries "the bush."

from <http://www.answers.com/topic/backcountry#ixzz2TwPKIZMP>

'Trails in the [park] core area should be more accessible, and designed, marked, and maintained to a higher Trail Class standard as they are likely to see higher usage. Backcountry area may be appropriate for longer distance trail opportunities, single use trails, and a lower level of management. Trails in backcountry areas offer a more intimate experience with fewer visitors, a greater challenge, and sometimes higher risk. Risk is associated with difficulty and remoteness of a trail, the probability of meeting others, and the level of management.

from http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/greenway/docs/DCR_guidelines.pdf

I'm compelled to say protection of 'backcountry' is most important priority. To me, this means vigilance of human civilization intrusions in the backcountry in the form of things that detract from a natural experience. And for me that's nonmotorized activities like those allowed in federal Wilderness areas. For others, it may include motor: boat, plane, bike, Time to talk is now.

Balance is key. We've got a maintenance backlog for what we have now and a backlog for backcountry areas needed for future generations.

Chris Parsons:

Funding for public access to backcountry trails and trailheads is important, but the expense of maintaining these trails in a condition that ensures the users safe use of the trail is critical. What good is hiking on a trail if you twist your ankle? Let's fund the coordination of volunteer and skilled workers to repair and improve our public trails, especially the federal lands trail system into wilderness areas (over used and in poor condition).

WA State Parks cross-state trail system should be supported with planning grants in order to engage communities in the placement and design of trailheads near communities that will benefit economically with tourist dollars and to help gain local support. The grant criteria providing extra points for being located near urban areas is unfair to backcountry or cross-state trail systems.

Durlyn Finnie:

The experience of wildness, getting away from civilization is what should be available to the public. Keeping the trails safe, and access of course take money. The private-public partnership is a method deserving of more effort. We all need to get out there!

Lunell Haught:

Trail priorities

There are countless legitimate ways to prioritize and it's sort of like 'which puppy do I leave at the shelter?' for me. While on the RCO grant evaluation committee I too wondered why the maintenance projects weren't simply included in the state budget. I have always been influenced by the volunteer maintenance participation as a way to judge potential support, but that needs a group such as WTA or a volunteer coordinator (state funded? And are we replacing bargaining unit work?) So there should be some consideration for that. In this economy I can make a case for a CCC type program in addition to subsidizing highway projects.

A concern I have with prioritizing by 'use' is from two personal experiences. I was the budget administrator when Title IX was implemented (my gawd, is she THAT old...yes) and at the time there was very little participation for girls and now you can't keep girls away. The culture changed based, in part, on attention (including funding). The other experience was when we first started asking the public for input on parks and we got a lot of soccer fields and swing set input. No one even thought of trails but now we know 'if you build them they will come.' So I'm reluctant to make a policy based on actual use as the only criteria. There has to be the 'inspired cool factor' because people invent recreational activities we haven't even considered.

As to ADA and parking lots, I liked what some of the presenters said at the last Washington State Trails Conference, which essentially was 'describe the condition and let the user decide if s/he can go'. I also find, at least in Spokane County, that we get trapped into a situation where we're trying to build a trailhead and end up having to improve a road, build to 'city' standards and end up spending a fortune (given to a little hyperbole here) when in my opinion a gravel lot with biological/natural storm water treatment would do it – but we spend money on parking lots and not trails because of the requirements which make sense in some situations (urban) but not others.

Signage – at another WTS conference one attendee reminded me that few signs were part of the outback experience – and I had to re-think my thoughts. I don't think we should be losing people outside, but I do think as long as we're going to put signs out they should be educational as well as directional. Here's what I mean. Explain how to 'read' a landscape – how to walk into a place that has few/no signs and consider sun angle, slope, drainage, a little orienteering, if you will. Look up from your smart phone and ask yourself 'what makes sense'? Say part of the experience is to make it different from downtown. And signs that explain multi-use: not just who yields to whom, but ideas that people can understand. "When you ride up to a horse the horse thinks you're a mountain lion and will rear, throw the rider and kick you and your bike" People frequently have NO idea how they impact other users. Not sure, but many independent spirited ones of us who do like to get out in nature are not diligent rule followers anyway, so helping users understand why may be useful. "Keep dog on leash" cries against everything independent about us. Something like: "Keep dog on leash to avoid damaging ground nesting birds and so you can find the poop when s/he goes and carry it out" may make more sense.

Although remote trails may be less used than urban ones, just knowing they are there is like money in the bank. We don't have to spend it, and we feel more secure knowing it's there. The sense of well being we have knowing we have outback, trails and somewhere to go is surely on a happiness priority.

As far as economic contribution – yes, we do have data telling us companies prioritize and prize quality-of-life, settle here, and create jobs here. There should be public funding of public land and I don't know for sure how to work this,

but having had my own uber-small business for 16 years I can tell you I'm not unhappy some of these taxes are spent on parks! Particularly when there are so few low cost activities for people, I love that people can still go out and enjoy.

The relationship between all the parks agencies/jurisdictions (Federal, state, county, municipal); Washington State Department of Transportation; and local transportation agencies is important so park/train investments can be coordinated. In Spokane County this is fairly well done, and it may be fairly well done elsewhere, but this coordinated effort certainly maximizes efficiency and opportunity.

I think projects/activities should be prioritized based on values (we identified them to include sustainability, etc). I think we should be unapologetic that we can't do everything everywhere. I can't camp in the public library, even though it's my tax dollar that's supporting it.

Jon Knechtel:

Funding for backcountry trails has been dwindling at a very aggressive rate over the years. There are many reasons for this starting with reductions in agency budgets. RTP funding through the RCO has helped immensely but in no way does it provide all that's needed, and I don't see a real solution on the horizon. As the Director of Trail Operations and Management for the Pacific Northwest Trail Association, the NGO for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail and the USFS, I see this on a daily basis. We rely heavily on volunteers and our youth programs, but funding is getting harder and harder to come by.

Some sort of dedicated funding is needed on a national level to maintain all of our trails whether they are backcountry, front country, or urban. The health benefits of trails as well as the economic benefits to local communities are well documented. I feel these reasons make a very good case for a dedicated funding source.

Patti Wible:

Several aspects come to mind; first, providing stable, meaningful funding for backcountry trails. They should be set up with no diversion possible of committed funding. Secondly; user groups need to work together in new ways. Possible State Trails Council? We have tried some things on our own but they tend to lack consistency, and need state leadership. Especially when it comes to trail maintenance and trail sharing issues.

Third, recreation needs more interagency and inter-department significance when it comes to planning; and projects. There are several good examples; of agencies out to complete a project with lack of planning; or coordination with the recreation side. Case in point—a decommissioned road-turned trail-at Green Mountain in Kitsap County. Property managed by DNR; notified users of some ditches being installed for RMAP/ stream stabilization. Over sixty ditches were installed; some were over 10 feet deep; rendering a previously heavily used trail (and handicapped accessible) unsuitable for any use. It will cost more to repair the trail to make it usable again than it did for it to be ripped up with a lack of coordination with DNR or the user groups. Or; how about the closure of horse camping at Burke Lake where the WDFW advisory group doesn't include the recreational users?

Jim Harris:

I agree with Patti's comments regarding:

- 1) Greater trail development coordination. It would be interesting to see what a work group could develop for a strategic plan for a State Trail Council.
- 2) There needs to be better interagency and intra-agency coordination. DFW made a presentation for development of a section of the Discover Trail during the last grant cycle, during which they state, if the trail were not built as part of the fish habitat improvement underway, it very likely would not be permitted. That may be true, if you look at permitting regulations narrowly, but fails to pass any common sense test.

Jonathan Guzzo:

We need to maintain a strong system of front country trails statewide to serve new hikers, but I'm concerned about losing backcountry trail opportunities. Time and time again, we see hikers start in the front country, and then develop a hunger to extend their adventures to backcountry hikes, using both day and overnight opportunities.

Our members are looking for destinations in the backcountry, such as lakes, peaks, rivers, waterfalls, views and other features. Secondly, hikers who visit the backcountry are looking for relative solitude, and well-maintained trails.

Hikers, like most trail users, are looking for loop opportunities, and many hikers want access to great features pretty quickly,

We need funding to support a range of opportunities. We can't just focus on the most popular trails while less-heavily-used trails languish. Given the triage state of our current trail funding situation, that's what happens. But to truly serve backcountry hikers and other trail users, we have to maintain opportunities beyond the gold-plated standards.

FINDINGS FROM DISCUSSION 2

Discussion 2: Thanks for your perspectives on important priorities. Let's refine your list down to a vital few things that should be on a work list for the State. Please list 2-5 of the most important issues relating to NOVA you see as emerging in the next five years (and only for the next five years). Think broadly—consider all kinds of issues that if worked on would improve things for NOVA stakeholders. In other words, if you were in charge and responsible to all citizens in the state, what is the short list of emerging issues you would work on that could be realistically addressed (or at least started) in the next five years?

Jon Knechtel:

As stated broadly in the responses to question #1, funding is the biggest need for all trails. With the health and education benefits derived from using trails, I think the state should reach out to the federal government for funding from HHS and DOE for trails. This would help all types of trails move forward.

Starting early in young peoples lives will give them an awareness of nature, stewardship, and the physical (and mental) benefits of trails. I feel we've lost an entire generation and need to start early to rectify those mistakes. This pertains to all trail types!

There are a lot of non-profit trail groups already working to achieve these results and they need financial help to continue the good work they're doing. Partnering with these groups, the state would have greater leverage in obtaining funding. The health benefits of trails would begin to be evident in a very short time frame and reduction in health costs would be beneficial to the entire population.

Jonathan Guzzo:

There is tremendous interest in developing and maintaining trails close to recreation opportunities. It's important to pay policy attention to them, but we shouldn't do that at the expense of our backcountry trails. Backcountry trails are the backbone of our hiking opportunities, giving hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers the wild lands experiences that they come to crave. Many of our best backcountry trails are within easy striking distance of Seattle and other urban areas, so they serve a population that ranges from casual hikers to experienced overnight backpackers. If we neglect maintenance of these critically important routes in the interest of adding and upgrading front country trail miles, we'll be doing a tremendous disservice to a broad and committed swathe of the recreation community. These are the same people who join organizations and volunteer to maintain trails. Examples of trails that are difficult to follow, damaged or unsafe include Headlee Pass, Sloan Peak and Squire Creek off the Mountain Loop Highway and Basalt Creek and Jack Creek on the Wenatchee River Ranger District—to name just a very few. The Trails Plan should address the need for backcountry trails and ensure that funding for their maintenance and repair continues.

At the risk of being obvious, the continued downward trajectory of agency funding levels is alarming. Our state and federal partners have gone from a slow downward glide path to a barely-controlled tumble. Legislative bodies at both the state and federal levels are unable to agree on budgets, which leads to uncertainty and a chronic ability to plan on the part of the agencies that serve outdoor recreationists. And the upcoming sunset of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) which provides critical funding for trails and other National Forest amenities, does not add to agency confidence, since the first half of each federal fiscal year's operations are paid for out of carryover FLREA funds, at least on Region 6 National Forests. Our elected officials must reauthorize FLREA and appropriate adequate funds to maintain our existing trail network.

Hand in hand with the impacts of funding cuts/sequestration goes the retirement of our agency staff. We are losing experienced land managers at a frustrating clip as they reach retirement age or are offered early retirement. In many

cases, these are the staff with whom we coordinate when we're planning trail maintenance activities. Losing them does not just mean that we are losing their work—we're potentially losing their critical on-the-ground knowledge and perspective. In the near term, that knowledge and perspective is irreplaceable, and the near term is a crisis. Land management agencies must prioritize mentorships for incoming staff and retention of existing long-term staff. Non-profits must inspire and train the next generation of agency land managers.

Finally, our public lands travelways—roads and trails—are fragile. One good swipe from a winter storm can wreak havoc on the entire system, causing millions in damage and closing trails and roads for years. We must work with Congress, the state legislature and our agency partners to coldly analyze our road system and close the ones that are not needed for core recreational or administrative purposes. We can use the saved money to upgrade and stormproof our recreation access opportunities.

Reed Waite:

Not an emerging issue, it's the continuing de-funding of maintenance and operation of trails and related facilities on nearly every level of government. There are bright spots in small pockets around the state where citizens enjoy, participate, and vote for trails-related bonds, recreation programs, and invest in purchase and development of land and waterfront properties.

My morning walk around Seattle's Green Lake is shared with the Park Dept's garbage truck's daily pickup, mowers, arborists, and paved trail brushers. I pass by volunteer planted and maintained gardens. Dog poop is picked up, fishers cast away, cyclists/boarders/rollerbladers/skaters coast along, kayaks and shells join endurance swimmers and pedal boats on the water. The commitment to public fitness and care for the park is evident.

Adequate funding for M&O at state, federal, and local levels is the key issue. \$\$\$'s fund committed professional agency staff, extend life of facilities, and protect the natural resources we depend upon.

I can't help but compare my experience last week in the Canada's province of Quebec. I registered in a NEW facility for a guided climb on a NEW via ferrate. The parking lots were messy – as construction vehicles moved through and the lots were being EXPANDED. Highway billboards advertised PARKS. I had no problem with the combined 15% national/provincial sales/consumption tax. I could see the benefits.

Gerry Hodge:

I'm taking the 'realistically addressed' piece of the question seriously and trying to avoid the idealistic and theoretical (although I believe wholeheartedly in those also).

Funding. Funding. Funding. My first important issue has more to do with the trail user. I see the continued trend of 'pay-to-play' funding playing out even further. Unfortunately, most of these schemes involve 'nuisance' fees that do more to keep bureaucrats employed and users inconvenienced than to actually benefit the resource. My preference is to not wall off the backcountry with more fees and complication.

A second concern is using the limited funding to get the most bang for the user buck. Use actual and projected use patterns to direct the most money where the highest usage is and will be. I know this could negatively impact some current recipients, but, as a state, we need to serve the most with limited resources.

Thirdly, rework the weighting of the grant criteria to more reward those with private dollar and volunteer labor contributions. Eliminate the ability of governmental grant applicants to claim other government monies as a "match"—or, at least, call out the private contributions in a separate category and weigh them more heavily.

Lastly, make it a stated priority for all outdoor resource agencies and private recreational concerns to have legislative talking points to continually hammer home the importance of the outdoors to our quality-of-life. As tax funding begins to flow back in, outdoor recreation should not be the last in line for money. We need to market our cause more effectively.

Linda Berry-Maraist:

Five things that can be done in addition to funding:

- 1) Lower the costs of trails by addressing some major issues that drive up expenses, especially for paved shared use paths. The issues around grade requirements are extremely expensive—the glaciers simply missed the memo that the world should be flat and ADA accessible. Sidewalks and roads have more flexibility than the standards for a paved shared use path—that is simply absurd, and enormously expensive both in terms of financial cost and environmental impact, which creates an enormous barrier to getting them built. We have to have a means to address the reality that

Washington has hills, and that people know that and yes we want to minimize the steepness of paved trails when possible, but we want to build them in lots of places where it is not flat.

2) Deal with the stormwater regulations and the interpretation that the new DOE stormwater regulations require all new bike shoulder projects to carry the burden of retrofitting the entire roadway for stormwater. If a minor bike project is burdened with solving the environmental ills of an entire roadway, adding bike shoulders will be cost prohibitive. This needs to be addressed at the state level.

3) Facilitate and support water trails access, including overnight camping at reasonable intervals. Puget Sound is unique with its many sheltered water ways and this could be a major marketing tool for ecotourism—where else can you get out in the water so easily in so many locations?

4) Work with WSDOT to champion flexibility in allowing nonmotorized use and crossing of highway corridors. That ROW was purchased by WA citizens—it should be seen as a resource that can support transportation by reducing the #s of people clogging the roads and increasing use of transit and nonmotorized methods. Allowing trail access in and to a WSDOT ROW should be seen as transportation Demand Management tool to be supported, not a problem to be fought.

5) Broaden the recreational users statute to include protection for government owned land and cut back on the risks to local (and state) government for allowing trails and public use. Reducing the amount of liability that local governments are responsible for will make them more likely to consider ways to get to “yes”, instead of reasons to say no.

FINDINGS FROM DISCUSSION 3

Discussion 3: The 1991 Washington State Trails Plan provides the following definitions for trails:

A trail is...

... a path, route, way, right-of-way, or corridor posted, signed, or designated as open for travel or passage by the general public but not normally designated as open for the transportation of commercial goods or services by motorized vehicles.

... an opportunity to experience solitude or companionship, recreation or challenge; an opportunity for the appreciation of nature; a means of achieving renewal of body, mind, and spirit.

Findings: The joint conclusion of the TRAILS and NOVA Advisory Groups is that the definition of a ‘trail’ from the 1991 Washington State Trails Plan should be revised. The Advisory Groups agree that a new definition for the Recreation and Conservation Office should,

- Specifically reference recreation**
- Be broadly inclusive of habitat types and modes of transport without making value judgments supporting *a priori* policy and funding choices,**
- Reference trails as a part of the state’s transportation system, and**
- Not reference the nature of the experiences associated with trail use.**

mikef:

Advisory Group member John Keates provided this comment by email:

Michael, my opinion is coming up with one definition for a trail will be practically impossible. I ride my bicycle on rail trails, hike, mountain bike ride, cross country ski and even do some motorcycle riding still. Each trail seems a bit different to me and the trail experience is also a bit different. Please don't include a definition that eliminates motorized vehicles. For example, motorized on trails for commercial purposes is needed just to do trail maintenance. Of the two definitions given, the second was better.

Michael Fraidenburg:

From the Facilitator

Let's have a discussion about this. Please offer amendments to my draft language or tell us if you are in agreement with it as written.

—————DRAFT RECOMMENDATION—————

Definition of 'trails' in the NOVA and Trails Plans

Key Findings and Recommendation

The 1991 Washington State Trails Plan provides the following definitions for trails:

A trail is...

... a path, route, way, right-of-way, or corridor posted, signed, or designated as open for travel or passage by the general public but not normally designated as open for the transportation of commercial goods or services by motorized vehicles.

... an opportunity to experience solitude or companionship, recreation or challenge; an opportunity for the appreciation of nature; a means of achieving renewal of body, mind, and spirit.

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- Specifically reference recreation,
- Be broadly inclusive of habitat types and modes of transport without making value judgments supporting a priori policy and funding choices,
- Reference trails as a part of the state's transportation system, and
- Not reference the nature of the experiences associated with trail use.

Recommendation: The NOVA and TRAILS Advisory Groups recommends the following definition.

The term 'recreational trail' means a part of the state's transportation system that consists of a clearly defined route of travel with a distinct starting point (trailhead) and ending point (trail end) that is a thoroughfare or track that can be mapped across land, snow, ice, or water that is used for recreational purposes.

END

Reed Waite:

Nice and concise.

Can we go down the path a bit further? The phrase "a part of the state's transportation system" begs the question whether local, county, private, federal (insert word: trails, facilities, infrastructure, etc. here)_____ would be included or excluded.

In most areas of the country, people hearing the words 'state transportation system' will be thinking train, bus, subway, ferry, freeway, etc..

WSDOT may have something to say about this. "The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is the steward of a large and robust TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM [emphasis added], and is responsible for ensuring that people and goods move safely and efficiently. In addition to building, maintaining, and operating the state highway system, WSDOT is responsible for the state ferry system, and works in partnership with others to maintain and improve local roads, railroads, airports, and multi-modal alternatives to driving." from <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/about/>

Dropping the 'state's transportation system' wording works out to this for a definition:

—The term 'recreational trail' means ... a clearly defined route of travel with a distinct starting point (trailhead) and ending point (trail end) that is a thoroughfare or track that can be mapped across land, snow, ice, or water that is used for recreational purposes.===

There's a small typo that I just loved – the distinct STARING point (trailhead). If you're anything like me, you'll be staring at the starting point, gazing at the ending point, and gawking all along the way! Great way to include idea of viewscape in trails.

Nikki Fields:

The proposed definition seems to go on and on, and I'm not sure about the distinct ending point part of it, since loop trails may not have distinct end points, plus end points and start points are the same thing, depending on your direction. Also, trails that join with sidewalks or roads for part of their length may not be so distinct.

How about:

The term 'recreational trail' means a route of transportation, mapped across land, snow, ice, or water, that is used for recreational purposes.

Lunell Haught:

I'm happy with trails being either transportation or recreation, (I commute on a trail that many use only as recreation) and am happy with it being loop or point to point. Not sure how long it has to be. I don't think they have to meet regulated specifications (certain surface, width); and although one might need a motorized vehicle to do repairs (like creating ditches on either side of one which would be a killer project with a shovel and not much hassle with a back hoe, I don't envision them as accommodating motorized vehicles.

Jim Harris:

Michael,

I'm responding to the draft definition. It's a good beginning, but I have a couple of questions to which I would be interested in hearing the reaction of others.

We are defining "recreation trails". While nonmotorized trails have been recognized as transportation corridors, it is my impression, based on federal transportation project funding, that this is not equivalent to "recreation". In the current definition, the sentence structure implies all recreation trails are part of the state transportation system. I would suggest, at the end of the definition, including language that states that some recreation trails are also part of the state transportation system.

I struggle with water trails. Can they be defined as "tracks that can be mapped"? I'm currently working on a water trail project as part of a FERC requirement and was ask to define a "water trail". Washington State Park's WAC defines it as, "a network of water trail sites", which I agree with, since there is no designated or constructed route between the water trail sites. It is more like backcountry travel where destinations exist, but no trail.

Thoughts from others?

Jim Harris

Lunell Haught:

You asked both a yes/no question as well as for discussion so not sure what all you want – the short answer is no, I don't agree. The longer answer is either we need to have modifiers on the term 'trail' or define it. I'm thinking "Trails have historically implied a path or waterway for walking or a few people in a vessel, typically through a natural environment, the current use includes trails with a variety of surfaces having designated or shared use with muscle powered conveyances for either transportation or recreation."

Dave McMains:

There is still the use of motorized trails that need to be addressed. They should not be part of the State transportation system as then the gas tax monies that are refunded to NOVA will be forfeit and the funding will be harder to raise for other projects. You can bet if it is stated that trails are part of the transportation system, there will never be funds available for our projects!

Kate Schneider:

I do not agree with the definition. Do trails need a starting and ending point? Some loop, some have several, some gradually begin. If we're talking about being part of a transportation system, doesn't that imply they're used for commuting, not just recreation? I would suggest keeping it simple, trails are a defined route. I also shy away from the "clearly defined route", as some are not so clear or defined.

Jim Harris:

The challenge with the previous trail definition is the vague, broadly inclusive approach. Without clarity of purpose, the current effort could end up in the same place.

What are we defining? What is included and what is excluded?

We are not interested in trails used by loggers to get from an upper landing to a lower landing, or other pathways used for commercial operations.

We are interested in developed or managed recreational trails.

We are not interested in motorized transportation corridors, but are interested in recreational motorized off-highway trails.

We are not interested in community sidewalks, but are interested in community trail systems.

The key is our focus on recreational use. So the definition of recreational trails must include a definition of recreation – an activity that utilizes leisure time for purposes that result in restoration of the human body, and/or restoration of the human mind, and/or the restoration of the human spirit.

A recreational trail may be used for other purposes, such as a nonmotorized transportation corridor, but if I'm correct, RCO's state trail plan focuses on recreational trails, while state and county transportation plans address nonmotorized transportation corridors.

This clarification is needed to also distinguish water trails from navigational channels.

A trail is developed or managed, as opposed to a path through a vacant lot. A trail or trail segment has an identifiable starting and stopping point. They may be the same point in the case of a loop trail.

A recreational trail may cross land, snow, or water, but a water trail is less defined by a specific place, and more by the general route and the network of upland facilities that provide access and support to the water trail user.

All that said – let me take past and current language under consideration and suggest the following -

A RECREATIONAL TRAIL is:

a path, route, or corridor, designated as open for travel or passage by the general public; to be utilized for leisure time activities, as a means of achieving renewal of body, mind, and/or spirit, through the opportunity to experience solitude or companionship, through the opportunity to experience mental and physical challenge or restful exercise; while participating in travel across land, water, or snow; by motorized or nonmotorized means.

The key words are "designated" (does this include climbing routes that are published, I have not problem with this inclusion), "leisure time activity", and "travel".

Lunell Haugt:

The reason Spokane County didn't specify only recreation or only transportation in its trail plan is because it didn't want to be excluded from transportation (enhancement) funds when they could be used on a trail that has great recreational function, but also provides a commuter corridor also. In Spokane County this would be the Fish Lake Trail, the Centennial Trail, and the north transportation corridor (formerly known as the north/south freeway). I believe the Gillman Trail might be another example of this.

Jim Harris:

I agree with Lunell that recreation trails may also be transportation corridors and eligible for transportation enhancement funding, but that is not a defining characteristic of a recreational trail.

Reed Waite:

Jim's definition gets some great words, in that it speaks to the range of recreational experience.

Appreciate Lunell's comments about specifying trails as transport or recreation. I'm not that concerned about this. There are many trails that have multiple designations. The Lakes-To-Locks Water Trail on metropolitan Seattle/King County waters has been used as a commute/transportation route by some people rowing or paddling to work; this does not negate the Trail's other more primary uses. Likewise the Northwest Discovery Water Trail is a recreational trail that best reflects the historic route of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery from the Clearwater in Idaho the confluence of fresh and salt waters on the Columbia at Bonneville Dam. You'll see L&C signage on some interstates and funding comes from many sources.

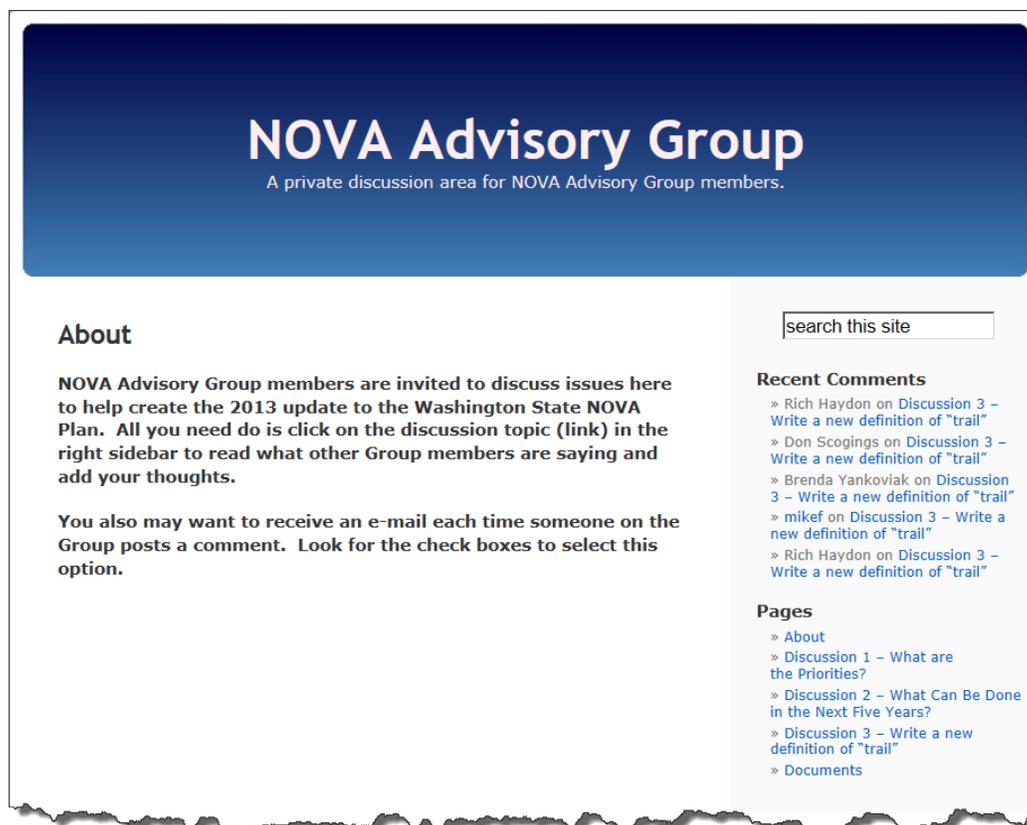
Lunell Haught:

Reed – thanks for your thoughts – my concern isn't how it's used but how it is designated – many of us have been on funding bodies that have looked at how to exclude requests – and don't want us to inadvertently disqualify ourselves for something – just trying to bet the best of all possible worlds :)

NOVA ADVISORY GROUP INPUT

INTRODUCTION

A key participant in the development of *2013-2018 Washington State Trails Plan* and the Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Program Plan was the NOVA Advisory Group. This group of knowledgeable stakeholders was engaged in three rounds of discussion over the Internet using a 'blog' Web site (see landing page, below).



These online discussions promoted dialog on several issues that was used to construct research components supporting elements of the Trails Plan and the development of the NOVA Plan. This Advisory Group was made up of the members of the NOVA Standing Committee that assists the Recreation and Conservation Office with policy development and funding allocations on NOVA issues.

NOVA Advisory Group Members

Mike	Blankenship	
Rick	Burk	Eastern Washington Dirt Riders
Louise	Caywood	Back Country Horsemen of Washington
Paul	Dahmer	Department of Fish and Wildlife

Dawn	Erickson	
Glenn	Glover	Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance
Steve	Hahn	Washington State Parks
Richard	Haydon	
Mark	Levensky	
Mark	Mauren	Department of Natural Resources
Mary	O'Neil	Audubon Society
Chris	Parsons	Washington State Parks
Jim	Putman	Pacific Northwest Four Wheel Drive Association
Casey	Salisbury	Mason County Sheriff's Department
Don	Scogings	
Brenda	Yankoviak	USDA Forest Service - Wenatchee

FINDINGS FROM DISCUSSION 1

Discussion 1: What are the most important priorities for improving backcountry trail recreation over the next five years?

Mark Levensky:

Remove trees and brush from hiking/horse trails and make safe crossings for hikers/horses over streams, rivers, and boulder fields.

Rick Burk:

New opportunities are always exciting and grab a lot of attention but we also need to remember that stewardship of existing trails is a constant and continuing need in being able to provide for all recreationists groups and protect and preserve the resources we have all developed.

Chris Parsons:

Maintenance of existing off-road trail systems remains a priority (fix what we already have). Wintertime recreation for public trail grooming (both for snow mobile and skiing) enables safe access to winter recreational areas and should continue to be funded. Federal trail systems going into wilderness areas needs special attention and more funding from the federal government to repair and maintain these important trails.

Rich Haydon:

As Mark, Rick, and Chris have already stated, maintenance of existing trails and facilities needs to be a priority over new development. Within the realm of maintenance, prevention and restoration of trail tread erosion needs to be the priority— this is the kind of damage that has the most long-term impact and is ultimately the most difficult to mitigate. Beyond that, there are relatively under-served recreation types that need to be considered; water based recreation (water trails, fishing access, put-ins and take-outs), bicycle trails (both paved and MTB trails), urban-proximate trails, and winter recreation trails being perhaps the best examples. Those less-served recreation types show a lot of potential for increased demand, compared to the more long-established modes of use, and a forward looking policy needs to recognize that. It's all a matter of balance— there will always worthy development projects, just like there will always be a need to serve the large demands for more "regular" recreation types, both motorized and nonmotorized— but within those broader sideboards an emphasis on maintenance and on less-served use types will be helpful.

Don Scogings:

I strongly agree with Rich. The State, Forest Service and DNR will have limited funding in the near term, perhaps even the next five years. In this environment, maintenance should take priority over development.

Don Scogings:

In reviewing the 2005-2011 NOVA Plan I find the following:

The Foreword, page vi "When policies are implemented, we anticipate that new facilities will be designed to minimize maintenance and –"

Policy C-5, page 12 "Projects can often incorporate design elements that reduce maintenance needs."

Stronger wording is needed in both of these policies with emphasis on maintenance.

Policy C-12, page 14 "Program administrators suggested that historically, too much funding has been directed to capital projects without necessary maintenance infrastructure and funding to support the efforts."

Discussion, section C, ORV Sport Parks, page 20 "Others point out that IAC's support and acquisition and development of sport parks has created increased demand for limited ORV dollars for maintenance and operations."

Discussion, section E, ORV and Nonmotorized Recreation: "Maintenance is a High Priority"

Appendix 1, 4. NOVA Program: 1994-2002, page 31 According to Table 3, maintenance received about 44% of what projects received. I think we should examine what the 2005-2012 ratio was.

Perhaps the target ratio in the updated plan should be 50/50.

Maintenance clearly was a major consideration in developing the 2005-2011 Plan and seems to me to be even more important in developing the updated plan.

Mark Mauren:

What are the most important priorities for improving backcountry trail recreation over the next five years?

- 1) More stable funding source for recreation providers to support management, enforcement and maintenance of their recreation programs. Though the majority of the current grants go towards maintenance and E&E, long term we need to shift the funding more towards development if we hope to meet the current and future level of service that the public demands.
- 2) Statewide look at what type and level of service that needs to be provided along with a more coordinated approach by recreation providers in helping to meet the statewide and regional service needs.
- 3) Development of guidelines for design and construction of sustainable and durable trails that meet user satisfaction.
- 4) Ensure more consistency in trail design and development to minimize long term maintenance cost and maintain user satisfaction.
- 5) Easy access for the public to maps and information regarding outdoor recreation opportunities in the state.
- 6) Better coordination with the recreation providers, law enforcement and the public in developing a more integrated approach to education and enforcement.
- 7) Care and feeding of volunteers – coordination, information, training and other support mechanisms.
- 8) Address private landowners gating access roads to public lands
- 9) Address why private landowners are closing their lands (Liability, cost) to public recreation opportunities
- 10) Address county and state regulation that were developed for the urban environment and not the forest environment. Current regulations have dramatically increasing the cost of redeveloping and developing trails on state and private lands.

Louise Caywood:

Maintenance and education on backcountry trails should be the priority (i.e., volunteer coordination, adhering trail maintenance to specification guidelines, signage and user contributions to educate newer users about how to conserve the lands they are using).

Dawn Erickson:

As has been stated above I agree that maintenance should be a priority over development especially when funding is scarce. I agree that volunteers are important and should be supported but so too should agencies that do the maintenance as much of the maintenance work is tedious and not necessarily the work volunteers want to do. Would like to see more development of bicycle trails. Road access to recreation sites is a concern.

Brenda Yankoviak:

Priorities for improving backcountry trail recreation over the next five years:

- Balance between maintenance of existing and new development. While we need to focus on continued maintenance of existing infrastructure, the 'public good' is not static, so we need to make a conscientious effort to ensure we're maintaining those trail systems and other infrastructure that are still best serving a public need. We also need to be adaptable and responsive to changing societal needs, and invest now for longer term sustainability. In many cases, our trail systems developed over time and were not specifically planned out with the most sustainable location or desirable user experiences in mind. We should continue to fund new, environmentally and financially sustainable development or re-routing of sections of trail that are in poor locations or on un-sustainable grades. This development may be more expensive in the short term, but could provide for cheaper maintenance needs and more desirable user experiences for the long term.
- Stable funding is key. Having said that, we also need to continue to keep the application process competitive so applicants continue to strive to be adaptable, creative and forward thinking in how they get the work done.
- Somehow need to address the threat of development within public land borders as timber companies continue to sell their land. This is a big concern for the Forest Service, as private in holdings can lead to reduced public access and increase management complexity.
- I agree with Mark that recreation providers and the public could benefit from a more coordinated approach to identifying and managing recreation opportunities across the state. Agency personnel are often (mentally) constrained by jurisdictional boundaries, but the public (and, in truthfulness, many roads and trails) often do not know or care about those boundaries.

Don Scogings:

Many trails and trailheads have not been properly maintained for a decade or more. Maintaining and upgrading these trails should be a priority and will provide greater the greater benefit.

FINDINGS FROM DISCUSSION 2

Discussion 2: Thanks for your perspectives on important priorities. Let's refine your list down to a vital few things that should be on a work list for the State. Please list 2-5 of the most important issues relating to NOVA you see as emerging in the next five years (and only for the next five years). Think broadly—consider all kinds of issues that if worked on would improve things for NOVA stakeholders. In other words, if you were in charge and responsible to all citizens in the state, what is the short list of emerging issues you would work on that could be realistically addressed (or at least started) in the next five years?

Mark Mauren:

- 1) More stable funding source for recreation providers to support management, enforcement and maintenance of their recreation programs. Though the majority of the current grants go towards maintenance and E&E, long term we need to shift the funding more towards development if we hope to meet the current and future level of service that the public demands.
- 2) Statewide look at what type and level of service that needs to be provided along with a more coordinated approach by recreation providers in helping to meet the statewide and regional service needs.
- 3) Easy access for the public to maps and information regarding outdoor recreation opportunities in the state.
- 4) Address private landowners gating access roads to public lands
- 5) Address county and state regulation that were developed for the urban environment and not the forest environment. Current regulations have dramatically increasing the cost of redeveloping and developing trails on state and private lands.

FINDINGS FROM DISCUSSION 3

Discussion 3: The 1991 Washington State Trails Plan provides the following definitions for trails:

A trail is...

... a path, route, way, right-of-way, or corridor posted, signed, or designated as open for travel or passage by the general public but not normally designated as open for the transportation of commercial goods or services by motorized vehicles.

... an opportunity to experience solitude or companionship, recreation or challenge; an opportunity for the appreciation of nature; a means of achieving renewal of body, mind, and spirit.

Findings: The joint conclusion of the TRAILS and NOVA Advisory Groups is that the definition of a 'trail' from the 1991 Washington State Trails Plan should be revised. The Advisory Groups agree that a new definition for the Recreation and Conservation Office should,

- Specifically reference recreation**
- Be broadly inclusive of habitat types and modes of transport without making value judgments supporting *a priori* policy and funding choices,**
- Reference trails as a part of the state's transportation system, and**
- Not reference the nature of the experiences associated with trail use.**

Rich Haydon:

How concise should this definition be? Here is some food for thought:

A trail is a designated, signed, and maintained travel way with the primary purpose of providing for public recreation or public access to a recreation site.

A trail will normally be distinguished by an improved tread surface, generally between 12 and 50 inches in width, and may include other developed features, structures, or signs necessary for the use and enjoyment of the trail by its intended user types.

In some cases, such as water trails or over-snow trails, an improved tread surface may be lacking, but in the absence of a continuous or well-defined tread other developed features, structures, or signs will clearly define a route of travel, a trailhead, and a trail end.

A trail should be designed and maintained to accommodate specified types of recreation which have been determined as appropriate to the setting and land use designation of that trail and its surrounding corridor. Trail design and maintenance standards should reflect levels of difficulty and challenge commensurate with that trail's specified appropriate types of use, while providing for public safety and the protection of natural and cultural resources associated with the trail.

"When you go somewhere; the way you got there is a trail."

Rich Haydon:

Here is a simple approach used by the Federal government for the RTP program:

U.S.C.

Title 23 – HIGHWAYS

CHAPTER 2 – OTHER HIGHWAYS

Sec. 206 – Recreational Trails Program

(2) Recreational trail.—The term "recreational trail" means a thoroughfare or track across land or snow, used for recreational purposes such as—

- (A) pedestrian activities, including wheelchair use;
- (B) skating or skateboarding;
- (C) equestrian activities, including carriage driving;
- (D) nonmotorized snow trail activities, including skiing;
- (E) bicycling or use of other human-powered vehicles;
- (F) aquatic or water activities; and
- (G) motorized vehicular activities, including all-terrain vehicle riding, motorcycling, snowmobiling, use of off-road light trucks, or use of other off-road motorized vehicles.

Mark Mauren:

Though some members of the public may not be thrilled with the current definition of a trail

"a path, route, way, right-of-way, or corridor posted, signed, or designated as open for travel or passage by the general public but not normally designated as open for the transportation of commercial goods or services by motorized vehicles."

It is short, generic and doesn't impose a value judgment. The NOVA grant program has worked hard over the last decade to be transparent, fair and neutral.

I would not include “. . . an opportunity to experience solitude or companionship, recreation or challenge; an opportunity for the appreciation of nature; a means of achieving renewal of body, mind, and spirit.”

Because it begins to bring subjectivity into the definition which opens the door to Interpretation and potential argument.

Paul Dahmer:

Replying within the context of the NOVA Program would narrow the definition of trails given that NOVA is a recreation program. Looking more broadly, the first definition seems accurate and most inclusive without making value judgments.

Brenda Yankoviak:

I agree with the last 2 callers: The first part of the current definition seems to be appropriately stated. The second, more esoteric part of the definition could/should be deleted. It's more of a value statement and doesn't help to further define what a trail is.

Don Scogings:

I think the Federal government definition provided by Rich Haydon is best. Adding definitions of what trails are not to be used for is inappropriate. The title “Recreational Trail is” would be better than “A trail is...” This definition uses the words “a track across land or snow,” this seems to me to be incomplete. At least add water.

Michael Fraidenburg

From the Facilitator

Let's have a discussion about this. Please offer amendments to my draft language or tell us if you are in agreement with it as written.

—————DRAFT RECOMMENDATION—————

Definition of 'trails' in the NOVA and Trails Plans

Key Findings and Recommendation

The 1991 Washington State Trails Plan provides the following definitions for trails:

A trail is...

. . . a path, route, way, right-of-way, or corridor posted, signed, or designated as open for travel or passage by the general public but not normally designated as open for the transportation of commercial goods or services by motorized vehicles.

. . . an opportunity to experience solitude or companionship, recreation or challenge; an opportunity for the appreciation of nature; a means of achieving renewal of body, mind, and spirit.

Findings: The joint conclusion of the TRAILS and NOVA Advisory Groups is that the definition of a 'trail' from the 1991 Washington State Trails Plan should be revised. The Advisory Groups agree that a new definition for the Recreation and Conservation Office should,

- Specifically reference recreation,
- Be broadly inclusive of habitat types and modes of transport without making value judgments supporting a priori policy and funding choices,
- Reference trails as a part of the state's transportation system, and

- Not reference the nature of the experiences associated with trail use.

Recommendation: The NOVA and TRAILS Advisory Groups recommends the following definition.

The term 'recreational trail' means a part of the state's transportation system that consists of a clearly defined route of travel with a distinct starting point (trailhead) and ending point (trail end) that is a thoroughfare or track that can be mapped across land, snow, ice, or water that is used for recreational purposes.

END

Rich Haydon:

I'd suggest changing the word "mapped" to something more active, along the lines of "navigated," or perhaps "followed," "traversed," "travelled," "taken," etc.

But as is I think it's a marked improvement over the old definition.

Michael Fraidenburg

Submitted by Mary Levensky by email.

Posted by the facilitator.

Michael,

Concerning the proposed definition of "recreational trail," I don't think a precise and accurate definition is possible. But "clearly defined" should be changed to "more or less clearly defined" to account for over-grown, seldom used, rock wall, boulder field, and water trails. (Are there clearly defined trails to the top of northwest mountains? Is there a clearly defined water trail between Orcas and Sucia? "Start at North Beach, head north, and be sure to keep west or east of Parker Reef!")

Mark

Brenda Yankoviak:

I like the first part of the original 1991 definition (without the values statement and adding 'A recreational trail is...'). Clearly, much thought was put into development of that definition: it's inclusive of many types of trails, (e.g. path, route, right of way, etc) provides some general language (e.g. travel or passage, not normally designated as open) to provide for interpretation or flexibility, if needed, and distinguishes a recreational trail from a commercial route. I like the original definition better than the proposed new definition. I don't think the idea of a trail being mapped or having a trailhead or ending point really adds to the understanding of what makes a trail a trail, and don't think defining the resource type (land, air, water, snow, ice, etc) is necessary either.

Don Scogings:

I agree the definition needs to be changed.

Rich Haydon:

I guess it's worth going back to the start: if folks are not comfortable with a definition that narrows the meaning of a "recreation trail" then maybe there is no reason to "define" the word in terms of NOVA. If the standard dictionary definition of a trail is sufficient, then crafting a NOVA-specific definition is unnecessary.

Are there "trails" that shouldn't qualify as "a trail" for the purposes of NOVA, or qualities essential for a trail to be eligible for consideration under NOVA? If there aren't concerns of that kind then there is no more need to define "trail" than there is to define "recreation," "bicycle," or "horse." Perhaps the real issue is "public access."