

# RECREATION AND CONSERVATION FUNDING BOARD SUMMARIZED MEETING AGENDA AND ACTIONS, MARCH 25, 2010

## Agenda Items without Formal Action

Item	Board Request for Follow-up ( <i>Due Date in Italics</i> )
Management Report	Include details of time extension data with the performance update ( <i>June</i> )
Legislative Session Review	Send a final report at the end of the special session. ( <i>April</i> ) Review the effect of travel restrictions on evaluation and advisory committees ( <i>June</i> )
Incorporating Sustainability into RCO Grant Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff should provide a process and timeline for developing criteria for the following WWRP categories, beginning with the next grant round: State Lands Restoration, Local Parks, and Trails. The process should consider how to work with other boards, and integrate with other policy updates/reviews of incentives where it can be efficiently combined. (<i>June</i>)</li> <li>Staff should consider a discussion with the Parks Commission regarding issues related to sustainability of projects and/or funding.. (<i>June</i>)</li> </ul>
Invasive Species Council Update	Move to June or October meeting

## Agenda Items with Formal Action

Item	Formal Action	Board Request for Follow-up ( <i>Due Date in Italics</i> )
Consent Calendar	<a href="#">Approved</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>November 2009 Meeting Minutes</li> <li>Advisory Committee Service Recognition</li> <li>Time Extension Requests, Washington Department of Natural Resources</li> </ul>	
Extension of Match Certification for Farmland Projects	<a href="#">Approved</a> as amended <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extended the match certification deadline for certain projects until June 30, 2010</li> </ul>	
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Compliance and Conversions	<a href="#">Approved</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approved Phase 2 of the WDFW land exchange and authorized the director to submit the conversion to the National Park Service for approval.</li> </ul>	
Changes to the Evaluation Process for the WWRP Natural Areas Category	<a href="#">Approved</a> as amended <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removed the project review meetings and changed to a written evaluation process.</li> <li>Amendment requires RCO to develop an online process for evaluators to share comments, questions, and scores.</li> </ul>	Add questions to applicant survey regarding written versus in person evaluations, and report results. ( <i>October</i> )
Factors for Considering Major Scope Changes – Acquisition Projects	<a href="#">Approved</a> as amended <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopted factors for board consideration of major scope changes.</li> <li>Amendment changed the first and final paragraphs of the policy so that the language is directive rather than permissive.</li> </ul>	
Policy Changes to WWRP Farmland Preservation Program	<a href="#">Approved</a> as amended. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised the environmental values evaluation criteria</li> <li>Updated the program definition to include land that is used primarily for commercial equestrian activities</li> <li>Amendment removed all references to community gardens from the resolution.</li> </ul>	Identify the RCO grant programs that allow community gardens. ( <i>June</i> )  Review process to develop criteria for commercial horse activities. ( <i>October</i> )
Revised Evaluation Criteria for Land and Water Conservation Fund	<a href="#">Approved</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised the criteria to include (1) a design question for development projects, (2) an urgency/viability question for acquisitions, and (3) allowance for combination projects to compete by responding to both questions.</li> </ul>	
Policy Regarding Nonprofit Eligibility in WWRP	<a href="#">Approved</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopted eligibility criteria for nonprofit nature conservancy organizations that apply in the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Riparian and Farmlands categories.</li> </ul>	

# RECREATION AND CONSERVATION FUNDING BOARD SUMMARY MINUTES

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Date: March 25, 2010

Place: Natural Resource Building, RM 175, Olympia, Washington

## Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Members Present:

<b>Bill Chapman, Chair</b>	Mercer Island	<b>Stephen Saunders</b>	Designee, Department of Natural Resources
<b>Steven Drew</b>	Olympia	<b>Rex Derr</b>	Director, State Parks and Recreation
<b>Jeff Parsons</b>	Leavenworth		
<b>Harriet Spanel</b>	Bellingham		
<b>Karen Daubert</b>	Seattle		

**It is intended that this summary be used with the notebook provided in advance of the meeting. A recording is retained by RCO as the formal record of meeting.**

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## Opening and Management Report

Chair Bill Chapman called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Staff called roll, and a quorum was determined. Dave Brittell was not present due to an excused absence.

- The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) approved the agenda as amended to move item #1D to its own topic, and to remove the Invasive Species Council update due to staff illness.
- The board reviewed Revised Resolution #2010-01, Consent Calendar. The resolution was revised to remove item #1D.

**Revised Resolution 2010-01 moved by: Parsons and seconded by: Derr  
Resolution APPROVED**

## Management Report

Director Kaleen Cottingham presented the management report. She noted that gas tax revenues are not coming in as predicted and the reduction will be prorated across all agencies, as shown in notebook item #2b.

## Grant Management Report

Section Manager Marguerite Austin noted that sponsors already have entered 320 applications into PRISM requesting about \$86 million. Most projects do not have funds associated with them yet. Marguerite also highlighted the 2009 LWCF report, which references Blueberry Park on page 7 and lists the unmet needs in the state on page 10.

Section Manager Scott Robinson discussed the portion of the Grass Lake Nature Park conversion involving a sewer line placement. The request was originally before the board in November 2008. He explained the solution approved by the director in 2010, and noted that the ultimate cost was very similar to the original proposal that the board rejected. Steven Drew noted that requests should demonstrate that sponsors made the greatest possible effort to find alternatives to the conversion and negotiate with landowners.

### Policy Update

Policy Director Steve McLellan described progress made by the Lands Group, and noted that it appears that we are meeting the mark on the legislative intent. Megan Duffy discussed the staff research on ways to manage water rights that are secured through acquisitions. One approach could be the State Trust Water Rights program. Staff is hoping to test it with two pilot projects before proposing any broad policies. Kaleen noted the importance of one policy that works for both boards.

### Performance

Kaleen Cottingham, Marguerite Austin, and Rebecca Connolly described efforts underway to obtain more outcome metrics from the RCO's project database, PRISM, and to provide data that board members requested regarding time extensions.

### Legislative Session Review

Policy Director Steve McLellan briefed the board on the 2010 legislative session and supplemental budgets. The capital budget will not be finalized until the revenue package is determined, but the proposed Senate and House versions would not result in cuts to existing WWRP projects. He also reviewed the operating budget proposals and legislation affecting natural resources reform, state agency cutbacks, and related issues.

The board discussed the proposed restrictions on how boards and commissions operate, including the potential travel limitations. Board members agreed that going to other parts of the state is an important part of their work. Unless travel is prohibited, they would like to keep the June meeting in Walla Walla, especially since they have not been to the east side of the state for some time. Members also agreed that it would be important to use technology for testimony from Olympia and reduce the amount of staff travel. Kaleen described the efforts underway to improve the technology.

## **Board Decisions**

The board took action on seven topics, as follows.

### Extension of Match Certification for Farmland Projects

Section Manager Scott Robinson described the match certification issue, and noted that one of the projects will receive the federal grant. Additional money may be coming for two other projects. He would like to amend the resolution to be until the end of June.

Board member Parsons moved to amend the resolution to change April 15 to June 30, seconded by board member Daubert. Chair Chapman noted it was a friendly amendment.

**Resolution 2010-08 moved by: Parsons and seconded by: Daubert**  
**Resolution APPROVED as amended.**

### Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Compliance and Conversions

Grant Manager Jim Anest presented an overview of staff work on compliance and how the RCO is prioritizing the work. He highlighted the efforts underway with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), describing the situation for projects #02-1109 and #68-603. He explained that finding appropriate replacement property can be very challenging. He also noted that conversions, when well managed, serve a valuable role in helping sponsors adapt to inevitable changes in values and needs over the life of a grant.

Board member Drew suggested that staff should prioritize the most significant or egregious conversions. Jim responded that the RCO has criteria for evaluating conversions, and there is a lot of work just to determine how serious each compliance issue is. Chair Chapman suggested working with partners to identify potential replacement properties.

Grant Manager Leslie Ryan Connelly presented Phase Two of the proposed land exchange between WDFW and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This portion of the exchange (RCO #69-609A) involves property funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The board's decision would be whether to approve the request for submission to the National Park Service. Board members and staff discussed the following:

- The Yakama Nation is participating in the cultural resources review. There will be an MOU between all parties, including the tribe, that requires compliance with Section 106 for all future activities.
- The land meets the criterion that it was "not managed primarily for recreational purposes" because it is DNR trust land, and recreation is not a primary function.
- It does not appear that the properties include spotted owl habitat because (1) DNR's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) does not cover such areas and (2) none of the appraisals had an adjustment for the HCP.

**Resolution 2010-02 moved by: Parsons and seconded by: Saunders**  
**Resolution APPROVED**

### Changes to the Evaluation Process for the WWRP Natural Areas Category

Section Manager Scott Robinson gave an overview of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Natural Areas and then reviewed the staff recommendation to (1) eliminate project review meetings and (2) use a written evaluation process in this category. Scott distributed and reviewed the public comment received.

Board members generally supported the proposal, noting that it could be more efficient and less costly for both the RCO and for the agencies that apply for grants. However, they were concerned about the loss of public participation and interaction among evaluators. They discussed concerns and options as follows:

- How should the board balance the need for more efficient and cost-effective evaluations with its reputation for public participation and openness?
- Would written evaluations make it easier for individuals throughout the state to participate as evaluators?
- Should the approach be tested as a one-year pilot only?

Board member Drew moved to adopt an amendment to strike "beginning with" in the last paragraph and replace it with "for." Board member Derr seconded the amendment.

**The motion failed with three in favor and four opposed,**

Board member Parsons moved to adopt an amendment to include the following language in the eighth paragraph of the resolution after the word "category": *"including provision for online public review and comparison of evaluations."* Board member Drew seconded the amendment.

Board members discussed whether an online "virtual conversation" among evaluators could mitigate the loss of interaction. The board also discussed how to mimic the public process so that evaluators could get public comment before completing their evaluation. Members noted that the evaluation meetings do not allow for public comment and that public attendance at the evaluations is low. Public support is part of the criteria for many programs, and most projects in the category have considerable public review before evaluation.

**Board members Parsons and Drew withdrew the motion.**

Board member Parsons moved to adopt an amendment to include the following language in the eighth paragraph of the resolution after the word "category": *"including a virtual discussion/sharing of draft scores between members of the evaluation committee."* Board member Drew seconded the amendment.

**The motion was approved unanimously.**

Board members agreed on the following items for follow-up:

- Add questions to the upcoming applicant survey to evaluate the use of written versus in-person evaluations. Staff should report back on the findings.
- Revisit the question of how to gather public comment on all projects at some point in the future.

**Resolution 2010-03 moved by: Daubert and seconded by: Parsons**  
**Resolution APPROVED as amended**

#### Factors for Considering Major Scope Changes – Acquisition Projects

Policy Specialist Dominga Soliz reviewed the staff recommendation and stakeholder feedback about factors that the board may consider when approving major scope changes for acquisition projects. Staff will propose the same factors to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

Board members discussed how to balance the needs for fairness in the process with the board's need for flexibility. Board member Parsons noted that the factors are not equivalent to criteria and that a standard package of information would be collected to give them information before considering the factors. He noted that their decisions set precedent, and that it will be important to track their decisions so they are consistent.

Board member Saunders proposed the following changes to attachment A:

- Change "may" to "shall"
- Change last sentence to "Sponsors and their outdoor grants manager shall provide..."

The board determined that a formal amendment was not needed to change the attachment. The sixth paragraph of the resolution was changed to add "as amended" after the word "policy."

**Resolution 2010-04 moved by: Parsons and seconded by: Spanel**  
**Resolution APPROVED as amended.**

#### Policy Changes to WWRP Farmland Preservation Program

Policy Specialist Dominga Soliz reviewed the staff recommendation and stakeholder feedback about proposed policy changes to (1) revise the environmental values evaluation criteria, (2) exclude community gardens from program eligibility, and (3) update the program definition of "farm and agricultural land." Staff would look at the criteria for equestrian activities later this year.

In response to questions from board member Drew, Dominga described the outreach with the Puget Sound Partnership and the State Conservation Commission. The board noted that

the language is an improvement, and a step in the right direction. Board member Parsons moved to adopt the portion of the resolution related to environmental criteria. Board member Saunders seconded. Both members later withdrew the motion.

Although board members agreed that community gardens have great value, the board debated whether they should be eligible in the farmland preservation program, with the discussion focused on the following questions:

- What is the definition of a “community garden”?
- How do community gardens relate to the program intent to preserve a critical mass of farmland in some areas?
- Does the size and scale of a community garden make a difference for eligibility?
- How should the board consider the role of community gardens in some communities, as a primary source of local produce?
- Could the board address community gardens through program criteria rather than through eligibility?

The board asked staff to provide them with a list of RCO grant programs that currently fund community gardens at the June meeting. The board also supported the staff intent to develop policies related to equestrian-related activities in the farmland program. Staff should report on progress and/or policy recommendations in October.

Board member Parson moved adoption of resolution with the exclusion of the first bullet under paragraph seven and any other text in the resolution related to community gardens. Board member Drew seconded.

**Resolution 2010-05 moved by: Parsons and seconded by: Drew  
Resolution APPROVED as amended.**

#### Revised Evaluation Criteria for Land and Water Conservation Fund

Policy Specialist Jim Eychaner reviewed the staff recommendation and stakeholder feedback about a revised evaluation instrument (“priority rating system”) for the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant program. The revision would add a design question for development projects and an urgency/viability question for acquisitions. Combination projects would respond to both.

**Resolution 2010-06 moved by: Parsons and seconded by: Daubert  
Resolution APPROVED**

### Policy Regarding Nonprofit Eligibility in WWRP

Policy Specialist Jim Eychaner reviewed the staff recommendation and stakeholder feedback regarding a policy change to allow nonprofit organizations to be eligible sponsors in the WWRP Riparian and Farmland categories.

**Resolution 2010-07 moved by: Drew                      and seconded by: Derr**  
**Resolution APPROVED**

## **Briefings**

### Incorporating Sustainability into RCO Grant Programs

Jim Eychaner summarized his research into possible approaches for incorporating sustainability into RCO grant programs, and asked for board guidance on next steps. Jim also noted a new PRISM metric that asks about the sustainable practices currently being used. The data will inform checklists and guidelines for programs.

The board discussed several aspects of sustainability, using the white paper summary as a guide. Key themes of the discussion were as follows:

- Lower maintenance and energy costs in parks can lead to economic sustainability, but some approaches may fall into “gray areas” of environmental sustainability.
- Long-term needs for maintenance and operations are linked to sustainability. Project criteria could consider how sponsors will address long-term maintenance. Such criteria, however, can be difficult to evaluate, score, and measure.
- The approaches to sustainability manifest differently in each program. Members and staff discussed examples of habitat conservation and managed recreation as demonstrating how projects can be sustainable in very different ways.
- The board strongly favors incentives over requirements. Rewarding sustainability may lead the board to funding fewer projects because sustainable practices can be more costly. However, the board wants to be cautious that it does not give extra points for approaches that are sustainable but overly expensive or too experimental.
- Staff should consider the approaches to sustainability being used by other state agencies. Coordination and consistency are important.

Board members agreed that sustainability cannot be addressed universally across all programs. They discussed priority by project type, in particular, development versus renovation.

Summary of board direction:

- Staff should provide a process and timeline for developing criteria for the following WWRP categories, beginning with the next grant round: State Parks, State Lands Restoration, Local Parks, and Trails.
- The process should consider how to work with other boards, and integrate with other policy updates/reviews of incentives where it can be efficiently combined.
- Staff should confer with experts and stakeholders in developing the proposals, but should not establish a standing committee. Informal workshops are an acceptable alternative.
- Staff should consider a discussion with the Parks Commission in June regarding sustainability.

State Agency Partner Reports

Board member Saunders noted that DNR was successful in getting biomass energy bill signed. Timber prices are starting to go back up, and they have been successful in predicting the types that are needed on the market.

**Meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.**

Approved by:

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Bill Chapman, Chair

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Date