RECREATION AND CONSERVATION FUNDING BOARD SUMMARIZED AGENDA & ACTIONS
April 8-9, 2015

Agenda Items

Item	Formal Action	Board Request for Follow-up
1. Consent Calendar A. Approve Board Meeting Minutes – October 29-30, 2014 B. Approve Time Extensions • 11-1173D, USFS, Franklin Falls Trail Renovations, Phase 2 • 11-1144D, Whatcom County, Lighthouse Marine Park Dock Replacement 2011 • 10-1383D, State Parks, Lake Sammamish Beach Renovation and Boardwalk • 10-1453R, DNR, Camas Meadows Rare Plant Habitat Restoration • 10-1660D, City of Sumner, Trail Segments #4 and #5 • 10-1458, DNR, Dabob Bay Natural Area 2010 • 10-1629, WDFW, Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration, Phase 2 C. Recognition of Service for Don Hoch	Resolution 2015-01 Decision: APPROVED	No follow up action requested.
2. Recap of the Retreat and Outcomes to be Incorporated into the Biennial Work plan	Briefing	Staff will follow the scoping recommendations as set forth by the board and prepare a briefing for the June meeting.
3. Director's Report A. Director's Report • Travel Meeting for September • Survey Results B. Policy Report and Legislative Update C. Grant Management Report • Featured Projects D. Performance Report (written only) E. Fiscal Report (written only)	 Briefing Briefing Briefing	 No follow up action requested. No follow up action requested. No follow up action requested.
4. State Agency Partner Reports	Briefing	No follow up action requested.

Item	Formal Action	Board Request for Follow-up
5. Overview of the Outdoor Recreation Economic Study	Briefing	Staff will provide the report and the PowerPoint presentation to board members following the meeting.
6. Draft Criteria for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Farmland Preservation Program	Briefing	Staff will return in June and present a refined criteria briefing.
7. Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Update - Phase III Overview	Briefing	No follow up action requested. A public hearing will be held in June to receive comment on the proposed changes.
8. Final Youth Athletic Facility Program Policies and Evaluation Criteria	Decision: Amended Resolution 2015-02 APPROVED	Revisit the match waiver requirement for the 2016 grant round in the next biennium.
9. Final Boating Grant Programs Plan	Decision: Resolution 2015-03 APPROVED	Staff will prepare a finalized version to be published online.
10. Conversion Request: City of Bellevue, Mercer Slough	Decision: Resolution 2015-04 APPROVED	No follow up requested.

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION FUNDING BOARD RETREAT NOTES

Date: April 8, 2015
Place: Olympia, WA

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Members Present:

Harriet Spanel	Chair, Bellingham	Jed Herman	Designee, Department of Natural Resources
Betsy Bloomfield	Yakima	Peter Herzog	Designee, State Parks & Recreation Commission
Mike Deller	Mukilteo	Joe Stohr	Designee, Department of Fish & Wildlife
Pete Mayer	Renton		
Ted Willhite	Seattle		

Summary

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) met on April 8, 2015 in a retreat/workshop format, facilitated by Neil Aaland. The purpose was to spend some time reviewing its mission, strategic plan, performance measures, and potential items for the 2015-2017 work plan. The following summarizes the key points discussed at the retreat and some proposed work to be done as a result.

Mr. Aaland suggested directing staff to review this summary and come back at the next board meeting with proposed changes to appropriate documents.

Opening Roundtable: What's on your Mind?

This agenda topic was intended to allow participants to express any issues or concerns they had outside of the structured agenda. It was not intended to result in any items for the annual work plan, but as a way to get dialogue started.

Statutory Mission

The mission statement from RCW 79A.25.005 (1) was reviewed and discussed. Key discussion points included:

1. Statutory mission statement has a recreation and open space focus
2. Mission references a "unified statewide strategy"; what is this?
   a. Roll up relevant plans from other agencies, including the board's various plans
   b. Quality of life and healthy communities as a focus
   c. Be more explicit in strategies – how to define and measure quality of life and healthy communities
3. Be more strategic – the current SCORP plan doesn't adequately set the bar
4. Keep in mind that government boards are limited in what they can do
5. Is the Board's role broader than implement grant programs?
6. Legislature provides funding and the board facilitates or directs how it's spent

What should the Board consider?

1. *The board and staff should do further work regarding how to fulfill the statutory "unified statewide strategy." This should include:*
    a. *Reviewing relevant plans from partner agencies and referencing them*
    b. *RCO plans including SCORP, Trails plan, NOVA Plan, Boating Plan*
    c. *Potential to include a plan for athletic facilities*
2. *Consider ways for better civic engagement (e.g. helping communities engage their constituents) and look for modern/social media/electronic town halls as means to achieve*

Review of the 2012 Strategic Plan

Key discussion points included:

1. It is useful – crisp, concise
2. Staff refers to it in communications with the board
3. Need to address issue of "quality of life" and how to respond to emerging trends
4. How should the board encourage meaningful civic engagement
5. Not necessary to have major changes to strategic plan
6. Should evaluate how to communicate the true costs of board's investments; include volunteer time, broader match leveraged, on-going costs of operations and maintenance (these are not reflected in board's current process)

What should the Board consider?

1. *The board should think about how to address quality of life and responding to emerging trends. Discussion first centered on developing a new principle #6, but these may already be included in principles 1 and 2.*
2. *Consider how to reflect other investments or costs leveraged by the board's investments. For example, volunteer time is not currently captured as part of the true benefit of a project. Volunteer time has been part of project work since the beginning, but may not be adequately accounted for. This tells a story about the benefit of project and the value of volunteer time. Also discussed how to capture future costs of operating and maintaining projects into the future.*

Agency Performance Measures

Key discussion points included:

1. The current monthly report includes performance measures that are agency-specific – necessary, but not sufficient – the board needs more. The measures are useful but operational metrics, not strategic metrics.
2. What do you need to know as board members?
    a. Is the funding going to the right places?
    b. Some uses, such as trails, span several categories, want to understand the total picture for these uses – sort by total, not funding source
    c. Compile historic data and compare to a recent span of time – last two years, or last five years. Start with the charts recently distributed by the director (labeled cheat sheet).
3. Measure warrants continued discussion by the board but don't change very often
4. Think about measures that align with a "unified statewide strategy"

What should the Board consider?

1. *Direct staff to research additional performance measures that reflect item 2 above.*

2. *Direct staff to look at why the agency hasn't measured the items adopted on page 4 of strategic plan, and develop recommendations to do so.*
3. *Have further discussion about measures that would better align with a unified statewide strategy.*

2015-2017 Work Plan

The board reviewed the status of the 2013-2015 work plan and ideas generated by staff (and from the surveys) for consideration to be included in a 2015-2017 work plan.
Key discussion points included:

1. The remaining items from 2014-2015 should be rolled over into the new work plan.
2. Consider including a placeholder for Governor or Legislative directives, including the follow up to the Joint Legislative and Audit Review Committee (JLARC) economic report.
3. Of the policy issues on the list, two were discussed at length. 1) Need to think about the water rights issue on funded acquisitions. This could be a useful policy but needs to be scoped and refined (and may result in including language in the contract); 2) the climate change issue needs to be carefully scoped and perhaps included as part of the sustainability policy and/or as a pilot effort.
4. Three issues not on the work plan list were added by the board for further consideration: 1) Issue of landowner liability coverage related to trails legislation discussed last year; 2) How to structure or develop the "unified statewide strategy"; and 3) a strategic plan for the Youth Athletic Facilities program, similar to the plan that is derived from SCORP.

What should the Board consider?

1. *The board asked staff to refine and categorize the list of proposed ideas, and come back with a proposed work plan at the next board meeting in June. The categorization includes looking at what are technical changes, what are major policy changes, and what are minor policy changes. The board noted that the 3-tiered approach has been helpful. Also, identify which issues are necessary for the 2016 grant round and which are independent of the grant application timeline.*
    a. *Staff should consider the additional discussion points as they refine this list*
2. *Staff should update the board on the current communications plan and its status.*

Closing

The workshop adjourned for the day at 4:30.

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION FUNDING BOARD SUMMARY MINUTES

Date: April 9, 2015
Place: Olympia, WA

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Members Present:

Harriet Spanel	Chair, Bellingham	Jed Herman	Designee, Department of Natural Resources
Betsy Bloomfield	Yakima	Peter Herzog	Designee, State Parks & Recreation Commission
Mike Deller	Mukilteo	Joe Stohr	Designee, Department of Fish & Wildlife
Pete Mayer	Renton		
Ted Willhite	Seattle		

It is intended that this summary be used with the materials provided in advance of the meeting. The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) retains a recording* as the formal record of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) meeting.

**The recording is intermittent due to technical difficulties from the beginning of the meeting through morning break.*

Call to Order

Chair Spanel called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Cindy Gower called roll, and a quorum was determined.

Item 1: Consent Calendar

The board reviewed Resolution #2015-01 Consent Calendar, which included the following:

A. Approve Board Meeting Minutes – October 29-30, 2014
B. Approve Time Extensions
   - 11-1173D, USFS, Franklin Falls Trail Renovations, Phase 2
   - 11-1144D, Whatcom County, Lighthouse Marine Park Dock Replacement 2011
   - 10-1383D, State Parks, Lake Sammamish Beach Renovation and Boardwalk
   - 10-1453R, DNR, Camas Meadows Rare Plant Habitat Restoration
   - 10-1660D, City of Sumner, Trail Segments #4 and #5
   - 10-1458, DNR, Dabob Bay Natural Area 2010
   - 10-1629, WDFW, Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration, Phase 2
C. Recognition of Service for Don Hoch from State Parks and Recreation Commission for his service to the board.

Resolution 2015-01
Moved by: Member Mike Deller
Seconded by: Member Peter Mayer
Resolution: APPROVED

Item 2: Recap of the Retreat and Outcomes to be Incorporated into the Biennial Work Plan (As Possible)

Neil Aaland provided a summary of the retreat held April 8, 2015, to review the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) Strategic Plan. The four main workshop discussions revolved around the board's statutory mission, review of the board's strategic plan and direction, key agency performance measures, and the 2015-17 agency work plan. (Please refer to the retreat notes above for details.)

Member Willhite thanked Mr. Aaland for his summary.

Member Mayer noted that at yesterday's retreat, during the discussion of the 2015-17 policy work plan, the board also identified the need for a strategic plan for the Youth Athletic Facilities program. In the retreat summary provided by Mr. Aaland, the section notes for the 2015-17 work plan reflect two items not included in the original policy work plan that were added by the board (bullet four of the list); Chair Spanel recommended adding the YAF plan here to total three items. The board agreed to amend the summary to add this item.

Item 3: Director's Report

Director's Report: Director Cottingham announced that the travel meeting for September 16-17, 2015 will be held in Spokane. The board will tour several funded sites and hold a business meeting on the second day.

Director Cottingham briefly highlighted several agency news items.

- A new brochure, *We'll Go Far Outside*, was released in January with the purpose of promoting the benefits of outdoor recreation in Washington.
- RCO recently released the greatly anticipated e-billing system. Ms. Cottingham acknowledged the leadership of Mark Jarasitis, RCO Chief Financial Officer, and staff dedication that contributed to the successful development of the e-billing process.
- RCO signed an agreement with archeologists at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to review projects for possible cultural resources impacts, potentially saving our grant recipients time and money.
- The State Auditor completed an accountability audit of RCO that focused on agency accounting functions; RCO had no findings in this audit.

Finally, Director Cottingham shared information about the study of public recreation and habitat lands completed by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC). RCO and other natural resource agencies provided written responses to the draft report, including a request for funding to research and plan a multi-agency data system (recommended by JLARC). The next portion of the JLARC report is due in April and will focus on how public lands impact respective counties' economic vitality.

Policy, Legislative, and Budget Updates: Wendy Brown provided an update of the current legislative session. Ms. Brown provided an update on the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) program administration bill, which has been slightly amended by the Senate and is still alive and moving. Other bills of interest include Senate Bill (SB) 5843, which creates a senior policy advisor on outdoor recreation in the Governor's Office and funds $1M for the *No Child Left Inside* initiative and is progressing through smoothly. HB 1738, SB 5987, refunds a portion of the gas tax to several grant category accounts, including NOVA, BFP, and boating grant programs.

Ms. Brown shared information about the Senate's budget proposal released yesterday and responded to questions from the board regarding RCO grant program impacts. Concerns arose around the WWRP bill and issues around land stewardship.

Survey Results: Scott Robinson, Deputy Director, provided an overview of the results from three surveys conducted in 2014. One survey collected feedback from grant sponsors, one from RCO grant management staff; a third survey collected feedback from board members. Survey topics included issues around the application and evaluation processes, grant manager satisfaction, and board member needs.

Mr. Robinson concluded by sharing the action items that staff will be implementing as a result of the surveys. Action items from the 2014 grant round surveys included improvements to the PRISM database, releasing grant manuals earlier in the application process, and improving the orientation process and diversity of the advisory committee. Action items from the board survey included holding a retreat to focus on the board's strategic plan and performance measures, develop better ways to link meeting topics to the strategic plan, and additional time for board discussion and public comment in meeting agendas (this occurred at yesterday's retreat session).

Grant Management Report: Marguerite Austin, Recreation and Conservation Section Manager, provided a status update on recent grant management activities. Grant management staff are attending the International Trails Symposium, preparing the final Youth and Athletic Facilities (YAF) program materials, and are testing new tools to support applicants through the grant application process.

Ms. Austin commended Laura Moxham, Outdoor Grant Manager, for her outstanding work with Boating Infrastructure Grant applicants to ensure applications were timely; out of the $12 million awarded nationwide, Washington applicants received nearly $1.4 million in grants for this program.

Karl Jacobs, Outdoor Grants Manager, presented information about two featured projects. The City of Bremerton, Evergreen Rotary Park Inclusive Playground (RCO Project #12-1464D), was funded in the WWRP Local Parks category. The City wanted to replace the aging play equipment at Evergreen Park with new, inclusive, fully accessible play structures. This was the #1 ranked Local Parks project in 2013.

The City of Sumner, Sumner Link Trail (RCO Projects #08-1262D and #10-1660D), was funded with two grants in the WWRP Trails category to construct missing trail segments that would link significant gaps in the 5-mile trail, which also connects to a 30-mile trail network.

Director Cottingham invited Rory Calhoun, Outdoor Grant Manager, to speak to the board regarding accessibility issues within the City of Bremerton's project. Mr. Calhoun also shared information about common accessibility issues and constraints, offering potential solutions, and highlighting this critical participation component.

Item 4: State Agency Partner Reports

Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Member Herman provided an update for DNR, including a brief legislative summary of bills of interest. The agency submitted four major proposals and is currently awaiting the negotiation process. Member Herman described a project in which Oso landslide memorial event data may help local and state governments project natural hazard sites and funding for prevention research. He concluded by sharing a collaborative effort carried out in coordination with State Parks regarding the use of trails in a WWRP project. The agencies meet on Discover Pass issues and collaborate to solve delivery and implementation issues, including fee generation issues that have come

up in the Legislature. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and DNR completed wildlife recreations plan that covered over a million acres north of Ellensburg in Chelan County.

Washington State Parks: Member Herzog shared information about the budget proposals as they affect State Parks, summarizing the capital and operating budget requests as they compared to the Governor's, House, and Senate proposals. Discover Pass revenues continue to rise, a positive upturn in budget projections, and further outreach is planned. Several ribbon-cutting opportunities are coming up this summer and board members are invited to attend.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW): Member Stohr briefed the board on the WDFW budget, providing a handout of the main budget summaries. He discussed challenges, including funding options that may cover the budget shortfall: fee packages that address gaps with increases in fishing and hunting licenses, increasing general fund state spending authority, and reducing and eliminating programs and services. WDFW is working with stakeholder groups and media to garner awareness and support in solving these challenges.

**The meeting recording issues were resolved at this point in the agenda.*

General Public Comment

Vlad Gutman, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition (WWRC), came to discuss the WWRP potential funding and the legislatively imposed alterations that have affected the program. He provided an overview of the positive aspects of the budget, and concerns regarding how funding was distributed and prioritized across categories. Some categories did not receive funding, and some projects were dropped. WWRC views the actions of the Legislature as a trend that will continue and has the potential to undermine the WWRP program. Projects that remain unfunded will be in jeopardy. Mr. Gutman encouraged that discussions be transparent. After the session ends, the WWRC intends to thoroughly review the WWRP legislation and invites the board and other statewide stakeholders to join this effort.

Member Willhite asked about potential budget cut effects in the program on rural communities, specifically economic impacts. Mr. Gutman noted that the outdoor recreation economic study helped to support the case that the work in these areas have a profound impact on more rural counties and areas.

Karen Daubert, Washington Trails Association, Kathryn Hollis, The Mountaineers, and Glenn Glover, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, came to speak regarding funding for soft-surface trails (also known as dirt trails). They requested that the board review the submitted analysis to assess the funding allocations in this category, noting that even small amounts can significantly impact development. Additionally, they stated that restoring balance in funding will more closely align with the original intent of the WWRP. Local community access and use are highly referenced with this request, driving the need for greater funding. The issue was brought last year, but too late to adjust the category criteria. Their letter of support, analysis, and fact sheet are included in the board materials.

Member Mayer commended the work of Ms. Daubert in compiling the materials that frame the issue. The analysis clearly demonstrates the challenges and issues.

Director Cottingham noted that the policy priorities reviewed at yesterday's retreat still include the trails category issues.

Member Deller requested information about how a more balanced split between rough and soft surface trails would be established. The team responded by sharing project highlights that demonstrate how funding could significantly impact development in positive ways.

Member Willhite thanked the team for joining the meeting today and commended the work of their respective organizations. In regards to the letter, Member Willhite applauded the manner in which the issues were clarified and brought to light in the analysis. Soft-trails are largely supported by volunteer hours and this should be noted.

Break 10:52 – 11:08 a.m.
Board Business: Decisions

Item 8: Youth Athletic Facilities Program (YAF) – Part 1

**This item presented out of order due to time. The second half of the briefing was resumed after Item 5.*

Leslie Connelly, RCO's Natural Resource Policy Specialist, presented an overview of the proposed 2016 Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF) policies, evaluation criteria, and program performance measures. During last year's budget request formulation, the board approved a total $12M ask for funding. She provided an update on the public comment received to date and changes made to the grant criteria in response to the comments. In addition, staff added policies from existing board policies from other programs and included them in the YAF program. Staff also clarified the program purpose, types of eligible and in-eligibility activities, inbound activity requirements, the scope of a project, compliance and evaluation criteria.

An overview of the proposed policy changes, proposed evaluation criteria, and performance measures are included in the board materials (Item 8). Ms. Connelly highlighted a special policy on matching share, unique to this grant program. She requested direction from the board on pursuing one of two options that affect projects located in disadvantaged communities.

Ms. Connelly drew the board's attention to item 5 on the policy list in Attachment B, which gives advantage to communities hit by a natural disaster or communities that have 80% or more of students enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program. Ms. Connelly presented two options to the RCFB for consideration: a special match policy for disadvantaged communities in which no match or 25% match would be required rather than the standard 50% match.

Member Bloomfield offered a third option for the match that involved a staggered calculation. Member Deller asked for more information about the eligibility for match reduction as it relates to natural disasters. Ms. Connelly noted that eligibility is addressed in the policy criteria and explained how eligibility is determined in these cases. The policy states that if a disaster occurs at any time during the implementation of a project, the applicant sponsor may come back to the board and request to retroactively waive or reduce the match.

Public Comment:
Doug Levy and John Keates, Washington Recreation and Parks Association (WRPA), provided an update on the current legislative actions that affect their interests. Mr. Levy expressed his appreciation that the public comments submitted prior to the meeting were included in the board materials. He encouraged support for this program, noting that having more data and detailed metrics to report will fuel funding. He mentioned the reduced match options and disaster declarations, stating that feedback received demonstrates significant interest but expressed support for requiring some level of match from

applicants. While Mr. Levy agreed with the goal of improving existing facilities, he expressed the value in acquiring and creating new facilities. He asked for clarification on the requirement to provide a legal opinion for first time applicants.

Mr. Keates expressed appreciation that this program is being revitalized. He encouraged the board to consider the unique local community attributes that may affect eligibility or access. A potential provision for these communities is suggested. He shared positive feedback on the new criteria added, such as eligibility and match requirements. For the latter, he asked that the eligibility criteria be more open to a diverse group of applicants. He noted concern for the 80% threshold of students enrolled in free or reduced lunch programs, and asked for the percent threshold to be lowered .

Member Willhite asked about the match requirements for a disaster community versus a community with high participation in a free/reduced lunch program, offering potential different calculation options for match in either case. Mr. Levy agreed, stating that waiving match for communities in disaster areas is concerning. He leaned towards supporting this group, although it is a difficult decision.

Director Cottingham replied to the question regarding legal opinion, stating that it is a one-time, all-inclusive requirement for any applicant in all grant programs. It is a statement of eligibility.

Member Mayer spoke to the disaster area support, advocating for a narrow window.

Member Willhite asked whether a distinction can be made between disadvantaged communities affected by natural disasters versus economic needs.

Board Business: Briefings

Item 5: Overview of the Outdoor Recreation Economic Study

**The board chose to hear this presentation prior to a decision on Item 8 YAF due to staff time conflicts.*

Wendy Brown, Policy Director and Legislative Liaison, advised RCO conducted an analysis of the contribution of outdoor recreation to the economy of Washington State. The statistics covered overall outdoor recreation expenditures, the contributions to the Washington State economy, out-of-state tourism contributions, taxes generated, and valuation of ecosystem services. Outdoor recreation spending in Washington equates to roughly $21.6 billion annually. The report demonstrates the relative public use (measured by day use) as compared to funding expended across various land types, including expenditures by land type and by legislative district.

One key finding from the report highlighted how expenditures and resulting contributions are shifted from urban to more rural areas, using outdoor recreation as a mechanism. Other findings show that in a national comparison of tourism spending by state, Washington State is unique in that it does not fund tourism. Typically, states agencies do not provide advertising and marketing for tourism; however, some agencies may use other funding sources to support counties.

Director Cottingham commended the work of Ms. Brown in developing this report and sharing it with stakeholders and the public.

Member Willhite asked whether the report considers data on volunteer hours. As it does not, he recommended that tracking this data be somehow accomplished and incorporated in future studies. He

also asked whether the tax revenues correlate with rural county expenditures in recreation. Ms. Brown noted that the study does not address this level of data.

Ms. Brown noted that there are efforts to share this broadly with legislators, and she is also conducting public outreach and awareness through presentations upon request.

Member Mayer and Member Willhite agreed and expanded upon the need to share this with legislators and potential funders.

Member Bloomfield noted that local and county commissions, and the Association of Counties are appropriate audiences for this information. Member Mayer noted that WRPA can help staff reach out to the Association of Counties.

Member Herzog stated that public health benefits are a critical missing piece and should be considered for future studies.

Board Business: Decisions

Item 8: Youth Athletic Facilities Program (YAF) – Part 2

**The board resumed discussion on this item after the presentation of Item 5.*

Member Mayer asked whether the choice between options, or choice to remove both options is possible. Director Cottingham noted that this issue is before the board by request of several key legislators, and may be part of the budget proviso. She recommended the board approve some type of match waiver or reduction to address requests these requests from legislators.

Member Mayer moved to adopt items 1-16 of the policies in Attachment 2 of the board memo, except for item 5. Under item 5, Member Mayer proposed requiring the same match as other applicants which is at least equal to the grant amount requested. He also proposed the board adopt option 1 of item 5 in Attachment B on the policy list which would allow match to be fully waived in communities affected by a federally declared natural disaster, allowing for further definition by staff to allow a longer recovery period.

The board discussed the motion and requested clarity on the definitions and distinctions between state and federal natural disaster declarations. Ms. Connelly stated that the state has many more disaster declarations than the federal government. The policy proposed uses the federal disaster declarations to limit the number of communities eligible for the match waiver or reduction. Ms. Connelly also stated that the length of time that a federal disaster can remain active is quite long as it can take a long time for a community to recover. Member Bloomfield stated the standard match requirements is equal to one to one.

Member Mayer amended his motion to reduce the match requirement to twenty-five percent for communities with 80% or more students enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program, which is option 1 of item 5 of the policy list in Attachment B. Member Willhite seconded the motion as moved by Member Mayer, with zero match waiver for disaster communities.

Director Cottingham spoke to the definition of economically disadvantaged communities, noting that the advice from other agencies was to remain objective. School lunch programs are one of the most objective evaluations of economically disadvantaged communities. Member Mayer is not certain that this captures

the true audience necessary for this grant category as the youth who participate in athletics may not be the same youth living around the funded facility.

For clarity, Ms. Connelly suggested addressing the match options for economically disadvantaged communities versus a community affected by a natural disaster separately.

Member Mayer withdrew his motion; Member Willhite withdrew the second.

Chair Spanel asked for a motion to address the options for communities affected by natural disaster separately. Member Willhite moved to address the options for communities affected by natural disaster separately, specifically moving to approve a zero match for federal declared disaster areas area which is identified as option 1 of item 5 in Attachment B of the policy list. Member Bloomfield seconded and the motion was approved.

The board discussed the option for reduced match for economically disadvantaged communities based on enrollment in free/reduced lunch programs. Member Willhite moved to approved an 80% enrollment in free/reduced lunch programs to qualify for reduced match in economically disadvantaged communities which is identified as option 2 of item 5 in Attachment B of the policy list. Member Deller seconded, adding a stipulation that the initial program would be considered a pilot and the data reviewed after two years. The motion was approved.

Member Mayer moved to approve a 50%, or one quarter matching share for disadvantaged communities based on enrollment in free/reduced lunch programs. Member Willhite seconded, adding a stipulation that the program would be re-evaluation after two years in the following biennium. The motion was approved.

The board clarified that from the options presented in the staff memo, and based on the motions made thus far, Option 1 under item 5 in Attachment B is most appropriate for the federal disaster areas and Option 2 under item 5 in Attachment B is most appropriate for the free/reduced lunch program enrollment qualifications for reduced match. The resolution was moved and seconded.

Resolution 2015-02
Moved by: Member Ted Willhite
Seconded by: Member Mike Deller
Resolution: APPROVED

Item 6: Draft Criteria for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Farmland Preservation Program

Leslie Connelly, Natural Resource Policy Specialist, began by acknowledging the contributions of Meg O'Leary, Policy Administrator, who assisted with this agenda topic. Ms. Connelly then summarized the background of the Farmland Preservation Account (FPA) criteria, provided a program overview including eligibility criteria and program funding history. She briefly addressed the reasons for revising the criteria, and then presented the proposed method to restructure the criteria.

Ms. Connelly highlighted discretionary criteria and other policy issues that may be adjusted, requesting direction from the board prior to initiating the public comment process.

Member Willhite supports the new criteria structure, and clarified the timeline for adoption of the new criteria and advocated for addressing the ability to allow for trails in the future on farms protected in the program.

Member Herman supports the new criteria structure, and provided some background on farmland definitions and process for interpreting criteria and program needs.

Member Bloomfield supports the new criteria structure, and noted there is a need to distinguish between rangelands and intensive agriculture. She agrees with the anti-prohibition move to allow for trails on protected farmland.

Member Deller supports the new criteria structure, and asked a question about public comment to the discretionary criteria. Ms. Connelly noted staff has not initiated public comment yet and that many of the changes were suggested during the evaluation process by the advisory committee and the applicants.

Member Stohr spoke to the criteria around zoning, as it seemed redundant.

Member Mayer supports the new criteria structure, and would like to see the discretionary criteria about local match, fit to local priorities, and the easement term length remain.

Chair Spanel supports the new criteria structure. Staff will return in June and present a refined set of evaluation criteria and draft policies before public comment.

Public Comment: No public comment was received.

Item 7: Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Update - Phase III Overview

Leslie Connelly, Natural Resource Policy Specialist, presented an overview of a third phase of proposed changes to Title 286 of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). In terms of the timeline, should the changes be approved by the board, RCO staff will draft rule revisions for phase III and implement the proposed schedule in time for the board's June meeting.

Ms. Connelly presented two requests for direction: 1) should the board's goals in WAC be retained, amended, or removed? And 2) how should project area be defined?

Member Herman suggested including goal statements that address the strategic plan in line with the discussion held at yesterday's retreat.

Member Mayer supports a meaningful revision of the board's goals, but is not opposed to removing language that is not relevant or does not reflect the goals established at the retreat. Member Herman responded, stating that one benefit for keeping goals in WAC is that there is a public process to review the goals whereas there is typically not a public process when the board adopts goals in the strategic plan.

Member Willhite supports following through with a revision and incorporate the retreat goals to further align strategies.

Ms. Connelly presented the second issue for the board's consideration concerning "project area," including examples and potential definitions. She then presented options for defining this term and its purpose.

Member Mayer asked whether the definition would be all-category inclusive. Staff responded that yes, it will be inclusive. He furthered his question by comparing the definition with other geographic terms used in the grant process, e.g. geographic envelope, work site, etc. He would like to see the relationships and definitions of these terms in the next briefing before the board, in order to see pros/cons as it effects various categories or an across all categories.

Member Herzog reiterated the need to be agile and creative with the definition of project area, noting that some opportunities for use of state parks would be subject to the rules linked to the project area and are not specifically addressed under allowable uses. He cautioned against a narrow definition of project area that would hinder future options for state parks.

Member Deller asked for some analysis of the benefits or consequences of the definition as it is applied individually to projects or across categories.

Board Business: Requests for Decisions

Item 9: Boating Program

Leslie Connelly, Natural Resource Policy Specialist, presented a final draft of the Boating Grants Program plan for the board's consideration. Adoption of the plan would guide the board's grant funding in grant programs that provide funds for boating facilities starting in 2016.

Member Willhite expressed appreciation of the comprehensive inclusion of board comment in the revised plan.

Resolution 2015-03
Moved by: Member Ted Willhite
Seconded by: Member Mike Deller
Resolution: APPROVED

Public Comment:
No public comment was provided on this item.

Item 10: Conversion Request: City of Bellevue, Mercer Slough

Chair Spanel began by stating the authority of the board as it pertains to decisions on conversions. She outlined the logistics for providing comment: 1) If practical alternatives to this conversation have been evaluated on a sound basis, 2) if the proposed replacement property is of equal value and utility 3) if the public has had opportunity to comment on proposed conversion and replacement. She reminded staff and the audience that the board does not review the decision of the local government to allow a conversion at a park or funded site; land use decisions, such as a projects location, environmental impact, zoning or other effects on a community are outside the board's authority.

Member Herzog recused himself. Chair Spanel confirmed his recusal.

Myra Barker, Compliance Specialist, summarized the Mercer Slough conversion request brought before the board in April 2014 and October 2015, including required criteria and assessment of the proposal. The City of Bellevue and State Parks asked the board to approve a conversion of 1.06 acres at Mercer Slough Nature Park. The conversion is due to the Sound Transit East Link light rail project, which will impact a portion of the western edge of the park. Because one of the projects involved was partially funded by the federal LWCF, the role of the board is to decide whether to recommend approval of the conversion to the National Park Service (NPS).

Member Mayer clarified the required 180-day timeframe for conversions and potential exemptions. There are no exemptions per federal rule.

Sound Transit: James Irish, Deputy Director of Environmental Affairs and Sustainability Office, and Don Billen, East Link Deputy Project Director, presented an overview of their conversion request and the research behind their proposal. They provided a brief history of the project planning and design, legal processes and preparations, and partnerships with the City of Bellevue. In their presentation, they provided an animated video of the proposed conversion areas for the project, stating that all practical alternatives to the conversion have been evaluated, and rejected on a sound basis, through an eight year study and public processes. Mr. Irish summarized the history of the project, as well as the public comment process and feedback received during that process. The main controversy resides in the alignment of the rail along one side of Mercer Slough or the other side. Mr. Irish shared that after extensive debate over the alignment since 2006, the current proposal is the most appropriate. Mr. Irish summarized the EIS and SEPA processes, and shared that Sound Transit is nearly the end of the final design phase for the project. Sound Transit hopes to begin construction this fall or early next year.

Member Deller clarified what is still under consideration with the shoreline hearings board. Mr. Irish explained that the issues being considered pertain to how the project complies with the shoreline code resources that are protected, in terms of access, views and natural resources that are within the shoreline.

City of Bellevue: Shelley McVain, Deputy Director of Parks, and Camron Parker, Senior Planner, provided an overview of the mitigation plan for Mercer Slough Nature Park which has involved many years of negotiation and collaborative design with Sound Transit. A slide of access points was presented, demonstrating their potential changes during construction, should the project continue, and the location of the future access points once the project is completed. Mr. Parker also summarized the East Link Mitigation Plan.

Ms. Barker presented the staff recommendation to the board, stating that the request meets all the conversion policy requirements.

Director Cottingham shared that the agency's attorney general is present to answer questions. Member Mayer confirmed that all public comment submitted was available to the board and they have had a chance to review it.

Public Comment:

RCO Deputy Director Scott Robinson acted as timekeeper for the public comment portion of this agenda item.

Geoffrey Bidwell, Save the Mercer Slough Committee, provided a history of his involvement with the Mercer Slough Nature Park over the past several decades. He shared that the Mercer Slough Comprehensive Plan did not address transportation impacts initially, and the proposed rail will be a

significant nuisance. He described the efforts to coordinate and communicate with the organizations proposing the rail structure, and the challenges therein. Mr. Bidwell clarified several points of the current proposal, and recommended denial of the request. He shared that the current proposal will be a detriment to the decades of work gone into establishing the park.

Erin Powell, Save the Mercer Slough Committee, shared a handout with the board developed by Hugh Jennings, field trip chairman for the East Side Audubon Society, who could not provide testimony in person. From the handout remarks, she highlighted the impacts of this project to wildlife, particularly birds, and the recreationers who use the park for birding observations. Data that supports the bird populations and sitings was shared with the board. The impacts from the project will impact the park and populations irreparably.

Ms. Powell then moved to share her own remarks. She described her personal experiences with the park, history of participation, and support for rejection of the proposal as planned. She shared that the LWCF grant requires conservation in perpetuity, and the project would destroy this park. She pleaded with the board to reject the request, and protect the parkland and continuous urban tree canopy. Ms. Powell described the potential impacts to wildlife, and losses, resulting from noise nuisances. The participation in the park will increase in the future, and need this park resource to remain in tact to support their quality of life. She shared that during the October 30 meeting, Member Mayer asked whether the citizens had input to the city council to which Mr. Parker replied in the negative. She shared the City of Bellevue vision statement from 1999, which does not encompass community input as needed. She closed by urging denial of the conversion request.

Bill Popp, Save the Mercer Slough Committee, presented hard-copy slides to the board for consideration. The slides include aerial maps that show a noise analysis, and existing structures (walls) that are included in the project area. Mr. Popp shared a slide with his edits that shows that a metal-link fence supplements some lower concrete walls lining the railway. The slides show the lack of visibility from the walls that block the park view. It is estimated near 40,000 people will use the causeway lined by these walls. Mr. Popp reiterated his testimony from October's meeting, that there are alternatives to this project as planned that are less detrimental to the park.

Alfred Cecil, Building A Better Bellevue, presented his comments in opposition of the East Rail project. He brought forth reasons against the conclusion that alternatives to the rail alignment were fully considered and adequately selected. In a historical summary of the assessment of project alternatives, Mr. Cecil stated that the analysis was not appropriately or adequately conducted. He recommended that the request be denied as presented, and viable alternatives, particularly a tunnel, be considered by the project engineers.

Renay Bennett, Bellevue Resident, began by reading the mission statement of the board. She shared that allowing Sound Transit to place the rail on the west side of the park does not meet the mission statement objectives. She contested the statements made by the project advocates, stating that the rail would be disruptive to visual and audio qualities of the park. The train would obstruct the view of the park, and includes an insufficient buffer to Bellevue Way. She cited other projects with wider buffers, and a statement by the project engineers that the park is several hundred feet from the rail. She contested this point and the analysis, and furthered her comments to address several inadequate points of engineering and construction design. She highlighted the opportunities for public comment and the feedback received so far, stating that no public comments have supported this project decision. The alternatives to use a tunnel or put the rail where an existing track remains were stated. She urged rejection of the conversion request.

Anita Neil, Save the Mercer Slough Committee, discussed shoreline regulations and their requirements for visual access. Ms. Neil brought up several points including conversion versus restoration and planting trees in the wetlands, and discussed the weaknesses, gaps, and lack of sound scientific analysis backing these points in the conversion policy and plan.

Bruce Nurse, Bellevue Resident, shared two points for board consideration: the material provided to the board for the meeting and the impacts of the light rail in the park. He discussed the supplemental document (Item 10, Attachment A) included in the board materials, in particular Question 2, which addresses, why a tunnel was not considered to be a viable alternative. Mr. Nurse stated that the selection of the currently proposed alternative is driven by Sound Transit, not sound analysis of alternatives. He shared that Sound Transit shared a document in December that outlined the frequency of trains per day. Mr. Nurse requested a delay of decision while the alternatives are considered more fully.

Don Davidson, Bellevue resident, stated that he agreed with all public comment provided in the meeting today. Mr. Davidson provided personal background regarding his work and educational expertise. Mr. Davidson described the context of the project in terms of larger urbanization issues, stating that the project is an "ecological disaster." He encouraged the board to reject the conversion request as planned. He stated that construction is far from reaching the slough, and there is time to delay a decision to build on or near the park.

Joe Rosmann, Chair, Building a Better Bellevue, spoke to Mr. Irish's comments, clarifying some points. He noted that in 2008, Sound Transit published a document that described an overall development plan and the reason for building an East Link system. He wanted to share that Building a Better Bellevue is not against rail, but strongly considers environmental impacts. Other factors that justified the system was to get people out of their cars, maximize use, and reduce greenhouse gasses. The factors do not make sense in the context of station placement along the slough. In 2007, there were discussions about the placement of the rail and reasons behind the current option. It was stated that there were nine alternatives, but this study is no longer available. Later, a study by Building a Better Bellevue justified a tunnel in an independent study, and the engineers and financial planners of Sound Transit told the board that a tunnel was a viable alternative. It was rejected for political reasons. Further examination of alternatives were considered, but continued to meet controversy and challenges as documented in materials provided to the board. He discouraged approval of the conversion, urging a delay so that Sound Transit may not use the decision with the Shoreline Hearings Board as leverage.

Will Knedlik, Eastside resident, thanked the board for taking their roles seriously. He stated that that delayed decision in October allowed for the public to gain greater awareness of the issue at hand, and new issues arising on the south side of the park. He stated that the plan is a multi-phase destruction of a unique water and park resource, and approval of the conversion is essentially approval of a phase of this destruction. He reiterated that the board has the responsibility to consider all viable alternatives, which has not occurred sufficiently based on the information submitted to the board and public comment received today. The lack of transparency has made impossible a thorough assessment of alternatives, forcing the board to rely on information from advocates whose mission is not in line with the board's goals and objectives. He stated that a practical analysis has not been conducted, and the requestors have not met these conversion requirements.

April Putney, representing King County Executive Dow Constantine, requested that the conversion be approved, citing the three conversion criteria that the board must address. She reiterated the three criteria

requirements, stating that the information and analysis submitted satisfies the conversion questions and requirements.

Bryce Yadon, State Policy Director of Futurewise, advocated strongly for approval of the resolution before the board. He stated that Futurewise agrees that all three required criteria have been met for approval of the conversion. He stated that public comment opportunities have been sufficient, and urged approval of the request.

Rachel Smith, Vice Chair of the Board for Transportation Choices Coalition, stated that the proposal is about more than park conservation; it is about a regional public transportation plan. She discussed the transportation goals, climate change goals, achieved by the plan. She asked the board to respect the extensive planning, public comment processes that have taken place and approve the resolution.

The board discussed the request prior to vote. Member Willhite inquired about whether the public comment submitted between October's meeting and today's meeting was reviewed and taken into consideration. Ms. Barker stated that materials provided prior to online publishing were thoroughly reviewed; exceptions include late arriving comments received within a few days of the meetings initiation. Member Willhite also inquired whether consideration of alternatives was included in the review. Ms. Barker affirmed.

Member Mayer inquired about the zoning category of the conversion. Lori Peterson, City of Bellevue, addressed the zoning question, which is categorized as R1, same as the conversion property.

Member Stohr asked for guidance on how to interpret the information provided on the potential alternatives to the conversion proposal. RCO's attorney general representative addressed the board, stating the project sponsor must demonstrate analysis that is not arbitrary or capricious. The board is not deciding whether the sponsor is making the right choice of alternatives, but that the choice was thoughtful and not arbitrary.

Member Willhite stated that it's clear that the sponsor has considered a number of alternatives, endorsing the current decision. Member Deller clarified that the decision is also based on conversion property alternatives.

Member Mayer clarified that the deliberations between the City of Bellevue and Sound Transit to avoid impacts were sufficient. Ms. Barker stated that it is her understanding that avoidance was considered, but the City of Bellevue would need to speak to this statement. Mr. Parker stated that the letter from the City of Bellevue (March 10) speaks to these issues.

Member Willhite stated that the delayed decision from October was well-justified. New information brought to light on the issue provides confidence that the opportunity to review additional information has been fulfilled. Under the board authority and statutory conversion authority, the opportunity to be heard has been sufficiently satisfied as a required part of the process. Upon reviewing the materials, Member Willhite found that the issues were satisfied by the courts and the decisions not under the authority of the board have already been answered. He stated that the decision before the board is regarding appropriateness of the conversion. He expressed confidence in the staff analysis, there are no stays, no federal appeals, and in terms of public comment he is greatly appreciative. Member Willhite believes the recommendation is not erroneous, not arbitrary or capricious, and the open public process has been conducted fairly and appropriately. He ensured that the board takes their role seriously and are

not making decisions to simply move along, noting that the record reflects that the conversion meets several criteria consistent with the board objectives and statutory obligations. He added that from the information presented, the alternatives were sufficiently considered.

Member Mayer thanked the public for attending and providing comment. He expressed appreciation to Sound Transit for being responsive to board questions. Conversions continue to be of high concern and importance, and as members of the board, it is paramount that funds administered are consistent with the way in which they were granted. He shared that experience making decisions relative to conversions is difficult, but the board takes these issues very seriously. He agreed with Member Willhite's comments regarding alternatives, park benefits, acreage ratios, and finally that mitigation efforts are persuasive even though not under the purview of the board. He also agreed that sufficient public comment has been gathered, even though the opportunity to be heard may not be reflected in the ultimate decision. He concurred that the three conversion requirements have been satisfied.

Member Deller agreed with Members Willhite and Mayer, and thanked the public and members of the City of Bellevue and Sound Transit for commenting. He agreed that the three conversion requirements have been met.

Chair Spanel agreed, acknowledging the work that has gone into this issue from all sides. She stated that the requirements that the board must review and consider have been met.

Director Cottingham noted a typo on the third paragraph of the resolution language; an extra "of' should be removed.

The board had moved to table a decision on the resolution at the October 2014 meeting. Member Herman moved to remove the resolution from the table, in order to be considered for decision today. Member Mayer seconded, and the motion was carried.

Resolution 2015-04
Moved by: Member Mike Deller (as amended to remove the typo noted)
Seconded by: Member Pete Mayer
Resolution: APPROVED

Closing Remarks

Director Cottingham noted that the next board meeting will be held in Olympia, Washington on June 24 and 25, 2015.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:43 p.m. by Chair Spanel.

Approved by:

Harriet Spanel, Chair

June 25, 2015
Date