



STATE OF WASHINGTON

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

October 2009

TO: Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Members
FROM: Kaleen Cottingham, Director
SUBJECT: Director and Agency Management Report, October 2009

Governor's Evaluation of Boards and Commissions

As part of an effort to streamline state government, the Governor is looking at the effectiveness of all boards and commissions. RCO was asked to provide basic information about RCO's boards and has done so. In the past legislative session, the Governor had proposed to eliminate two of RCO's advisory committees -- Nonhighway Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) and Firearm and Archery Range Recreation (FARR). In the memo, I discussed how our agency's success is due in part to the involvement of the public in the decision-making through these advisory committees. I noted that the committees do not have to be mandated in law and that we likely would continue them, even if not required by statute. I further asked that the Biodiversity Council, Invasive Species Council, and Forum on Monitoring Salmon Recovery and Watershed Health not be considered for elimination, as well as the two grant-making boards (Salmon Recovery Funding Board and Recreation and Conservation Funding Board).

Transforming the Natural Resources Agencies

The 2009-2011 budget directed the Governor's Office to convene a group of representatives from the natural resources agencies to consider consolidating agencies to improve service and reduce costs. Directors of the natural resources agencies have been meeting during the summer to develop possible approaches to reforming how natural resources are managed and protected in Washington. The report, which is a first look at large, structural governance changes, will be presented to the Governor on September 11.

The ideas being discussed range from creating two agencies (natural resources and environmental) to keeping the status quo but better linking the various programmatic areas. Some ideas suggest aligning the regional boundaries of those agencies with regional offices. We also are looking at whether the various grant programs across all of our agencies could be better configured or aligned and how we could improve our monitoring, research, and data management. The ideas will be evaluated based on whether they improve customer service, increase efficiencies, and advance the state's commitment to protecting and restoring natural resources and the environment, working collaboratively on natural resource issues with tribes, promoting sustainable commercial and recreational use of natural resources, and protecting public health.

The comment period has not been set yet, but is expected to run through September and part of October. We will be soliciting comments from agency staff and some of our key stakeholders to solicit their thoughts. I will ask this board to discuss the report at its October 8 meeting and decide how best to respond to the Governor.



Employee News

- **Steve McLellan** has joined RCO as the new policy director and legislative liaison, replacing Jim Fox. Steve comes to us most recently from TVW, where he was their producer. He has spent time as legislative staff and with executive agencies (Utilities and Transportation Commission and the Energy Office). Steve received his undergraduate degree from the University of Puget Sound and attended the University of Washington for both his law degree and his master's in public administration.
- **Leslie Ryan-Connelly** has been promoted to the senior outdoor grants manager-acquisition specialist. She will be working across all grant programs. We will be recruiting for a new grant manager to fill the position Leslie leaves behind.
- **Moriah Blake**, who was the administrative support for the salmon section, has been promoted to an administrative assistant 5 and will be doing work for grant sections, working on improving management systems.
- **Patty Dickason**, who has supported the conservation section, will be taking a year's leave of absence. During the transitional first month or so, she'll be working part-time to complete a draft of the administrative support operations manual.

State Boating Agencies Host Forum

The Agency Boating Committee, which includes staff from the Department of Natural Resources, State Parks and Recreation Commission, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and RCO, hosted a boaters' forum in July. This was the first combined meeting of three advisory committees: State Parks' environmental committee and Boating Safety Council, and RCO's boating programs advisory committee. In addition, several members of the boating public attended. The goal of the forum was to share information amongst the groups. Attendees shared success stories focused on outcomes of RCO and State Parks grants. The Washington Boating Alliance offered to host a boaters' conference as a next step. The Agency Boating Committee has offered to provide technical assistance to the Boating Alliance for this conference, perhaps to be modeled after the trails conference.

Legislative Update

The legislature will be meeting for committee hearings in early October. We've been invited to present an update on invasive species to the Senate Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation Committee. In the House of Representatives, we'll be providing an update on a legislative assignment to assess several aspects of salmon recovery. Both the house and senate natural resource committees expect to hear about the "transforming the natural resources agencies" process.

Additionally, a legislative work group assembled to address the new construction of State Route 520 (the Evergreen Floating Bridge across Lake Washington) has asked all agencies with some permitting or approval of that project to make several legislative presentations in September. We will be presenting our conversion associated with the Arboretum Waterfront trail and the process for satisfying all legal requirements.

Re-appropriations Rate Right on Target

In a recent Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) discussion, staff took a look at re-appropriation rates, which is the amount of money that isn't spent in one biennium and must be moved to the next biennium. Using historical data from 10 years, staff created a new tool for projecting current expenditures. The tool shows that we can expect a 50 percent re-appropriation rate and that our current expenditures are on target with that expectation. Staff is hopeful that we will be able to beat that rate by completing more projects, more quickly because of new systems put into place to track project milestones and close out nearly completed projects.

News from our Sister Boards

- **Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)** – The SRFB grant round is underway and staff are reviewing 198 proposals. The board met in August and tackled several meaty issues, including a lengthy conversation about engineered logjams, a discussion of options for allocating small grants, and approval of a new policy that allows large forest landowners to propose projects if they are able to provide sufficient match and meet legislative mandates.
- **Washington Invasive Species Council** – Council staff recently hired a contractor to create a baseline assessment of invasive species in Puget Sound. Work on this project is scheduled to end in 2011. The council also welcomed new members: Pene Speaks for the Department of Natural Resources, Kathy Hamel for the Department of Ecology, Bill Tweit for the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Brett Thompson for the U.S. Coast Guard. The council also has formed a new work group to begin to assess current invasive species laws and authorities and to discuss whether changes to the law are needed to address gaps and overlaps, especially for non-plant species.
- **Biodiversity Council** – The Biodiversity Council's four working groups each met in August, and have developed four separate pilot project proposals for consideration by the full council. The council has allocated \$40,000 towards these small, start-up projects to advance elements of the biodiversity strategy. The science group is asking for funding for the biodiversity scorecard project, the incentives work group is seeking \$10,000 to develop a detailed framework for a statewide clearinghouse of incentive programs serving working landowners and others. The land use work group is asking for \$10,000 to fund a Web site that can serve as a one-stop shop for land use planners looking for resources on biodiversity conservation tools, strategies, and case studies. Finally, the education and outreach work group is developing a proposal to leverage existing award programs for biodiversity conservation through better marketing on Web sites and perhaps even through producing a coffee table style book celebrating the many landowners across the state going above and beyond to steward biodiversity on their land.
- **Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group** – The Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group hosted its first state land acquisition forum in August. The forum was a chance for state agencies to identify opportunities for coordinating land acquisitions and disposals. The lands group also held its quarterly meeting in July. Members decided to expand the group and discussed its role in the Governor's process for transforming the natural resources agencies. The lands group was offered as a model in the process for coordinating state land management. Item # 10 includes more information.

- **Forum on Monitoring Salmon Recovery and Watershed Health** – The forum finalized its comments to draft monitoring guidance published by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The forum has drafted business rules, which are critical to having a process in place to formally adopt the high-level indicators and protocols required by legislation adopted last session. A forum work group is refining recommendations to the SRFB for how it should fund monitoring. Forum staff met with the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority to improve coordination between Washington State's Status and Trends monitoring program and similar programs conducted on federal lands by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The forum plans additional meetings in conjunction with development of watershed health indicators, which are scheduled for adoption in December. Staff also participated in meetings with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council to refine its high-level indicators and associated metrics, and with the Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership on ongoing regional coordination issues. The forum's next meeting is set for September 11.