



STATE OF WASHINGTON

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

MEETING DATE: September 2009 **ITEM NUMBER:** 5

TITLE: Sustainability and RCO Grant Programs

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APPROVED BY THE DIRECTOR:

Proposed Action: Discussion and Direction

Summary

Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff proposes to address sustainability through changes to Manual 2 (Planning Policies) and grant evaluation questions. Staff seeks direction from the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) for next steps.

Strategic Plan Link

Considering the issue of sustainability in board grant programs supports the board's strategy to develop and coordinate outdoor recreation plans and strategies that look to the future and balance investments across a range of recreational activities.

Background

In March 2008, staff presented a memo called "Enhanced Strategic Planning for Recreation and Open Space." One of the options presented was to

... focus on how public investments in recreation and conservation advance other big picture public policy agendas. For example, how can the investments strategically address our state's response to global warming or the public health response to reducing obesity rates?

Subsequent discussions with the RCO director and board chair have resulted in a focus on sustainable practices and the general idea of "sustainability", including how the projects funded by the board impact or address consequences of global warming, efforts to recover Puget Sound, or our threatened salmon species..

Analysis

Defined simply, "sustainability" is the idea that the actions we take today can be sustained over time without taking resources away from future generations. RCO grant programs reference sustainability in evaluation questions, but the overall approach is not systematic or strategic.



RCW 39.35D.030 (standards for major facility projects) provides a statutory foundation for developing a more systematic approach to sustainability. This law requires that all major facility projects of public agencies receiving any funding in a state capital budget must be designed, constructed, and certified to at least the LEED silver standard.

“LEED” is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a program managed by the US Green Building Council. It provides third-party verification that a building was designed and built using strategies aimed at improving performance in energy savings, water efficiency, CO₂ emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts. LEED points are awarded on a 100-point scale, and silver standard is 50 points or above.

The board’s ability to apply LEED standards may be limited because LEED is intended primarily for buildings and the statute applies to facilities with at least twenty-five thousand square feet of usable floor space. Board grants typically do not pay for buildings other than restrooms or small shelters. For example, a snow shelter funded by the Recreation Trails Program might be only 800 square feet.

As public initiatives such as the Puget Sound Partnership and “smart growth” progress, recreation providers will likely be expected to play a higher-profile role in sustainable development. In fact, some already are considering and implementing sustainable practices. The Department of Natural Resources is engaged in a major effort to re-examine recreation on state trust lands through its Sustainable Recreation initiative. Other agencies, including State Parks, already incorporate LEED standards when feasible. The board saw an example of a low impact local park when it visited Blueberry Park in Bremerton.

Therefore, staff recommends that the board consider ways to encourage grant applicants to consider sustainability and relevant LEED standards in their renovation and development projects. Relevant standards could include:

- stormwater design including pervious surfaces in parking lots or on trails,
- water efficient landscaping,
- accommodation of “alternative” transportation, and
- use of recycled materials.

The board has a number of approaches available to it, from simply recognizing sponsors that are engaged in sustainable practices to requiring use of relevant standards (e.g., as an element of required plans). The board also could encourage sponsors to use the standards and measure the implementation through grant evaluation questions or project descriptions.

Next Steps

Based on the discussion and direction of the board, staff will develop policy options for board consideration and public input.