

January 20, 2022

Dear Senators Rolfes, Robinson, Wilson and Brown:

The 15 undersigned organizations are writing to respectfully request \$15 million in ongoing state funding be included in the 2022 supplemental operating budget to help reduce the maintenance backlog for state parks and recreation lands.

Washington is a great place to work, live and play, and our state parks and recreation lands provide some of the best opportunities in the nation to access the outdoors. More than 90% of Washingtonians recreate outside, and with the state's population projected to grow by 2 million people (26%) by 2040, we must be prepared to meet current and future needs. Our organizations represent more than 94,000 members who support, steward and enjoy our state's tremendous parks and recreation lands.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, visitation to our state parks and recreation lands was already steadily increasing. As Washingtonians sought safer outdoor alternatives during the pandemic, numbers have skyrocketed. Agencies view current visitorship as a baseline that will only continue to grow.

Meanwhile the maintenance backlog on state lands has continued to increase while funding has remained static. State agencies estimate that the cost of the current backlog on state lands is at least \$50 million to \$75 million annually. With more people getting outside, the impacts are noticeable – campgrounds, trails, roads, toilets and other facilities are in critical need of repairs and upgrades. The lack of resources needed to address the increased use is leading to damaged toilets, overflowing trash cans, damaged trails and a disappointing and confusing visitor experience. It is important we make investments now to improve recreation infrastructure to better manage peoples' impact and help them responsibly visit these special places.

We are respectfully requesting a total of \$15 million dollars (Operating) annually in ongoing funding be provided to each of the three agencies – Washington State Parks, Washington State Department of Natural Resources and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife -- to help reduce the maintenance backlog on state parks and lands. This request takes a first step in addressing the maintenance and operations shortfall by directing \$5 million to each of the three agencies. We encourage these agencies to partner with organizations, such as nonprofits, to assist in the maintenance of public lands.

Sincerely,

Andrea Imler
Advocacy Director
Washington Trails Association

Kitty Craig
Advocacy Director
The Wilderness Society

Lee Lambert
Executive Director
Washington Bikes

Thomas O'Keefe
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director
American Whitewater

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Back Country Horsemen of Washington

Christine Mahler
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Marc Toenyan
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Tod Petersen
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Tom Short
President
John Wayne Pioneer Wagons and Riders on the Palouse to Cascades Trail

Betsy Robblee
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Yvonne Kraus
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Jeff Bohman
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