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Recreation**
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October 12, 2018

Governor Jay Inslee

Office of the Governor

PO Box 40002

Olympia, WA 98504-0002

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR \$130 MILLION CAPITAL BUDGET REQUEST FOR WASHINGTON WILDLIFE
& RECREATION PROGRAM AS RECOMMENDED BY THE RCO AND THE WWRC

Dear Governor Inslee:

The Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition, along with the many organizations and individuals who have signed onto this letter, respectfully urge you to support the Recreation & Conservation Office's (RCO) \$130 million Capital Budget request for the Washington Wildlife & Recreation Program (WWRP) for the 2019-21 biennium.

For nearly 30 years, the WWRP has been our state's premier tool for habitat conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities. The program has played a significant role in our state's landscape and quality of life, investing over \$1.4 billion into state and local parks, trails, wildlife habitat, working lands, and more. It is nationally recognized for its fair, objective, and independent funding process.

In seeking a \$130 million appropriation for the WWRP, we recognize that the need for the WWRP has grown as our state's population has increased, wildlife habitat continues to be threatened, and the demand for outdoor recreation has never been higher. In many ways, this request is actually quite conservative. Even with a \$130 million appropriation for the next biennium, we are concerned that we will still fall short in meeting the urgent need to preserve Washington's most precious natural resources and invest in recreational opportunities.

Robust funding for the WWRP is more important than ever as our state's population growth has accelerated in recent years, adding almost a quarter of a million people in the last two years alone. Indeed, since 2008 the state added over 700,000 residents—that's like dropping a Denver, CO or Washington, DC right in the middle of our state. Unfortunately, the state is not keeping pace with the needs of this growing population. This growth has also driven up construction and land costs, so funding for the WWRP must increase to simply maintain purchasing power.

This growing population also impacts our environment. Some of the Northwest's most iconic plant and animal species are in rapid decline due to habitat loss and fragmentation, declining water quality, and ecosystem degradation. This year, over 30 proposed WWRP projects seek to aid our threatened salmon populations and to protect an additional 220 miles of stream bank. Now more than ever, robustly funding the WWRP—the state's primary means of conserving native ecosystems and important wildlife habitat—is critical to protecting the

*Deceased

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diverse lands and iconic species that are integral to our state's identity and our environmental health.

Local communities are stepping up to meet this increased need and demand, as demonstrated by the significant increase in WWRP applications. This year, 273 applications requesting \$197 million were submitted to the RCO, a 12 percent increase over the last grant cycle. Without increased WWRP funding, many of these communities' highest priority conservation and recreation needs will not be met.

The new match reduction policy is also increasing demand for the program while making it more equitable for communities across the state. The WWRP has always been a key tool for underserved communities to secure much-needed funding for parks and recreation facilities. The match reduction policy is giving even more communities the ability to create critical green spaces for kids and families to enjoy. Communities have responded well to this exciting new policy: in the current grant round 55 projects qualified for the match reduction to improve program equity, including 3 new WWRP sponsors.

We recognize the importance of the WWRP for many other state priorities, including mental health and childhood academic performance. The WWRP contributes to the physical health and the mental wellbeing of children and adults, through the creation of countless opportunities for outdoor exercise and relaxation. Research has consistently shown the importance of outdoor access on childhood development, academic performance in school, and the mental and physical health of people of all ages.

Investing in the WWRP also invests in our economy and fuels job growth. The WWRP helps support 201,000 outdoor recreation jobs in our state—more than the information technology sector or the aerospace industry. Outdoor recreational lands generate more than \$26.2 billion in consumer spending annually and are responsible for generating \$2.3 billion in state and local tax revenue. Studies show that rural counties in particular benefit from the outdoor recreation economy and tourism made possible by programs like the WWRP.

The WWRP does all this in an exceptionally cost-effective manner. For every state dollar invested in the WWRP, an additional 63 cents is leveraged from local communities. According to a recent analysis by Earth Economics, WWRP projects often provide millions of dollars in additional benefits to communities each year in the form of ecosystem services, tourism dollars, and other consumer spending.

For all these reasons, we urge you to support this request for \$130 million for the WWRP in the 2019-21 Capital Budget. Adequate funding for the WWRP is more important than ever to address our state's rapid population growth, the need to preserve our shrinking green spaces, and the strong demand for recreational opportunities. We believe this amount is necessary to support recreation and conservation efforts statewide and preserve Washington's natural heritage for future generations.

Respectfully,



Christine B. Mahler
Executive Director

Opinion Leaders

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Bill Chapman, CEO & President, Millennium Bulk
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Governor Dan Evans
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County
Patricia Lantz, Commissioner, Washington State
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Doris McConnell, City Council Member, City of
Shoreline
Ryan Mello, City Council Member, City of
Tacoma
Tom Reeve, National Board Chair, The Trust for
Public Land
Jeromy Sullivan, Chairman, Port Gamble
S'Klallam Tribe
Christie True, Director, King County Department
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City of Spokane

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Mountaineers Books
Onda Origins
PCC Community Markets
Plauché & Carr LLP
Pope Resources
REI
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Stanford Munko & Co PLLC
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Trail Insight
TwispWorks
Washington REALTORS®
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Agencies & Tribes

Airway Heights Parks & Recreation Department
City of Chehalis

City of Chelan
City of Electric City
City of Everett Parks & community Services
City of Lakewood
City of Newcastle
City of Pullman
City of Snohomish
Clallam County Parks, Fair & Facilities
Olympia Parks, Arts & Recreation
Peninsula Metropolitan Park District
Port of Camas-Washougal
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe
Skagit County Parks & Recreation
Snohomish County Parks, Recreation & Tourism

Recreation

Access Fund
Alpine Lakes Protection Society
American Whitewater
Back Country Horsemen of Washington
Back Country Horsemen of Washington,
Nisqually Chapter
Back Country Horsemen of Washington, Pierce
County
Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance
Ferry County Rail Trail Partners
ForeverGreen Trails
Middle Fork Outdoor Recreation Coalition
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust
Outdoor Youth Connections
Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition
Peninsula Trails Coalition
Recreation Northwest
Sports Safety and Education Association
The Mountaineers
Washington Bikes
Washington State Parks Foundation
Washington Recreation & Parks Association
Washington Trails Association
WenatcheeOutdoors.org

Hunters & Anglers

Bellevue-Issaquah Chapter of Trout Unlimited
Mule Deer Foundation

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Washington Wildlife Federation
Washington Council of Trout Unlimited

Conservation

American Farmland Trust
Arboretum Foundation
Bainbridge Island Land Trust
Center for Natural Lands Management
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
Columbia Land Trust
Conservation Northwest
EarthCorps
Forterra
Great Peninsula Conservancy
Lummi Island Heritage Trust
Methow Conservancy
Nisqually Land Trust
North Olympic Land Trust
Palouse Land Trust
PARC Foundation of Thurston County
PCC Farmland Trust
Pilchuck Audubon Society
San Juan County Land Bank
Skagit Land Trust
South of the Sound Community Farm Land Trust
The Conservation Fund
The Lands Council
The Trust for Public Land
The Nature Conservancy
Vancouver Audubon Society
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Washington Association of Land Trusts
Washington Forest Protection Association
Whatcom Land Trust
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Horsemen of WA
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Adam Maxwell, Campaign Manager, Audubon
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Kristina Mayer, Principal, KLMayer Consulting
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Tom McClelland
Paul McCollum, Natural Resources Director,
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe
John McGlenn, President, Washington Wildlife
Federation
Mike McGlenn, Trailhead Chairman, Back
Country Horsemen of Whatcom County
Bruce McGlenn
Mike McGlenn
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Neil McReynolds, Leadership Council Member,
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
Nancy McReynolds
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Nisqually Chapter
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Gary Miller
Joan Miller, Member, The Mountaineers
Steve Miller, Advocacy Committee, Trout
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Jana Morgan, Back Country Horsemen of WA
Linda Morin, Events Coordinator/Education,
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Joelle Nausin
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Terry Nightingale
Kristen Nivling
Kim Noah, Director of Operations, Port of
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Pat Nordby
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Ralph Owen, Retired
Mary Owens, Chapter Treasurer, Back Country
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David Patton, NW Regional Director, The Trust
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Lisa Pelly, Director, Washington Water Council
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Russell Powers, City Clerk/Treasurer, City of
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Mara Price, Bird Sightings Coordinator, Pilchuck
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Cindy Ray
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Elizabeth Visconti, Member, The Mountaineers
Tom Vogl, CEO, The Mountaineers
Jeff Waddington
Jack Waddington
Paul Walker
Jean Walkinshaw
Lilly Wall, Recreation Manager, City of Chehalis
John Walser
Michael Walton, Landscape Architect
Emily Warden, REI
Maria Wardian
John Warhol
Rachael Weakland, Seattle Aquarium
Kristi Weir
Tom Weir
Ryan Weir, Alaska Airlines
Robert Weisel, Columbia Bank
C Keith Wentworth
Margaret Wetherald, Keller Rohrback LLP
Fred Wert, WWRC Board Member
Jerry Wheeler
Julie Whitacre
Kristin Wier

Nancy Wiest, Secretary, Pierce County Back
Country Horsemen
Katy Wilkens
John Willett, President, Sports Safety and
Education Association
Chrissy Williams
Stephanie Williams
Peggy Willis, Washington Environmental Council
Don Willott
Judy Willott
George Willoughby
Daniel Wilson
Melody Winkle
Leonard Wolf
Cheryl Wolf, Point B Consulting
Alyssa Wolf, REI
Bruce Wolverton, The Mountaineers
John Woolley
Robert Wyman, City Manager, City of Newcastle
Cindy Yager
S.N. Yoshihara
Kathy Young, President, Back Country
Horsemen of WA
Suzanne Zahniser
Nina Zerbo
Kenneth Zirinsky
Lynn Zwaagstra, Director, City of Kirkland Parks
& Community Services