WASHINGTON WILDLIFE AND RECREATION COALITION

Leveraging Public Funds to Protect Washington's Parks, Wildlife and Working Farms

Frequently Asked Questions

How is the WWRP good for the Economy?

People want to live and work in scenic areas and our communities attract companies that value the region's natural amenities. By protecting our natural resources, the WWRP helps to ensure that our state's businesses continue to attract and keep quality employees. That's why major employers like Boeing, Group Health, Puget Sound Energy, John L. Scott Real Estate, REI and Weyerhaeuser support the Coalition. The Coalition is also supported by the Washington Realtors, the Washington Forest Protection Association and the Washington State Grange.

How do Local Businesses benefit from the WWRP?

Outdoor recreation related tourism is a major source of revenue in our state. Local and state sales tax revenues are generated by campers, boaters, hunters and others visiting state parks and wildlife lands. New sources of revenue are often generated by tourists, businesses and retirees who are drawn to the area by mountains, clean air, wildlife and scenic vistas. According to the Outdoor Industry Foundation, active outdoor recreation, such as hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing contributes $8.5 billion annually in retail sales and services across Washington.

How does the WWRP create jobs?

44% of WWRP projects are development projects that create local jobs. The rest are acquisitions and easements that put money in the pockets of local landowners. Landowners reinvest these dollars in their communities and businesses. These investments fuel the economy and generate taxes that return to state and local coffers.

Where does the Money come from?

WWRP grants are NOT funded in the state's operating budget which pays for teachers and human services. WWRP dollars are only from the state's capital construction budget, primarily from the sale of general obligation bonds. The WWRP does not compete with the Public Works Trust Fund because the PWTF has a different dedicated funding source.

How does the WWRP Help Farmers and Ranchers?

The WWRP's Farmland account provides the only state funding available to preserve working lands. WWRP farmland grants can be used for easements to help farmers sell the development rights on their land, lifting much of the financial pressure to develop. They can also be used to compensate farmers should they choose to put part of their farm into wildlife habitat. If a local government buys a farm, they must attempt to resell it to a private landowner.

How does the WWRP affect Local Tax Revenues?

The WWRP's 2005 amendments require state agencies to make payments in lieu of property taxes (PILT) to local governments for all habitat land acquired by the program. The PILT payment equals the open space tax rate paid by private landowners. The state is also required to pay property assessments for weed control, local improvement districts, fire districts and all similar payments at the same rates as private landowners.

How does the WWRP help Protect Wildlife?

Hunters, anglers and wildlife enthusiasts support the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) because it is Washington's most successful conservation and outdoor recreation program. The WWRP grant program is the primary source of state funding for protecting habitat that fish and wildlife depend on. It also enhances the public's access to Washington's great outdoors by creating and expanding state and local parks, building fishing docks and funding public access to shorelines.

How does the WWRP Support Local Control?

Communities needing new boat docks, parks, ball fields or habitat protection can apply to the WWRP for matching grants, leveraging state funds for local concerns. State agencies apply for WWRP funds too, but the RCO's competitive process gives preference to projects that comply with local land use and open space plans. The application process requires that county commissioners be notified. If a project is not welcome, then legislators from that district can remove it from the project list by signing a request.

Does the WWRP help the State Maintain its Land?

The WWRP grant program provides funding to WDFW and DNR for stewardship projects that help maintain our state's habitat and recreation lands. The WWRP also requires the state to pay property assessments for weed control, so if a state agency does not maintain its property, neighbors can contact the local weed board.

How does the WWRP affect Property Rights?

The WWRP promotes property rights by working with willing sellers to provide an alternative to regulation. Because the WWRP does not include any condemnation authority or land use regulation, each acquisition requires a willing seller.

How does the WWRP help keep our Water Clean?

Land conservation reduces surface run-off and helps aquifers recharge, making WWRP funding a key component of protecting the long term health of Puget Sound, the Columbia basin and even our drinking water. 54% of projects funded at $100 million this year will help to protect or restore Puget Sound. The WWRP's new Riparian category provides up to $19 million every two years to acquire and restore vital fresh and saltwater shorelines. Both salmon and non-salmon habitat are eligible and qualified land trusts and all state and local agencies can apply, including lead entities, tribes, and park, port, school, and conservation districts.

How does the WWRP Affect Climate Change?

As our climate changes the WWRP grant program helps plants and animals adapt by connecting habitat areas so they can migrate. Land conservation also reduces flooding and storm water runoff, which protects stream flows for fish and clean drinking water. As our state's largest funding source for local parks and trails, the WWRP also helps get people out of their cars.

How Much Land is Enough?

As long as our population continues to grow, families need places to play, wildlife need protection from development and aquifers need to recharge so we have clean drinking water and healthy waterways. Despite our success the demand for WWRP grants remains high. In 2008 alone there were nearly $272 million in requests for 370 proposed projects, yet the state legislature funded just a quarter of the projects.

How the Process Works

Who's Eligible to Apply for WWRP Grants?

Cities, counties, special districts, lead entities, tribes and qualified land trusts are eligible. Applicants need to contact the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), the state agency that administers WWRP grants. The next deadline is in the spring of 2012.

How are WWRP Applications Evaluated?

The RCO takes each application through an award-winning competitive process that guarantees only the best projects are funded. Applications are evaluated by a team of experts from state and local agencies and the public according to the benefits of the project, the level of threat to the property and the amount of community support. Then projects are ranked within four accounts which include twelve categories.

What's the Distribution of WWRP funds?

The distribution is set by state statute and varies depending on the appropriation. Funding for the new Riparian and Farmland accounts does not kick in until the appropriation exceeds $40 million.

WWRP in Millions	Habitat	Recreation	Riparian	Farmland
$ 40	$ 20	$ 20	$ 0	$ 0
$ 50	$ 21	$ 21	$ 4	$ 4
$ 60	$ 24	$ 24	$ 7	$ 5
$ 70	$ 27	$ 27	$ 10	$ 6
$ 80	$ 30	$ 30	$ 13	$ 7
$ 90	$ 33	$ 33	$ 16	$ 8
$ 100	$ 36	$ 36	$ 19	$ 9

What are the other Grant Categories?

In addition to the Riparian and Farmland accounts, the Habitat account includes Natural Areas, Critical Habitat, Urban Wildlife Habitat and State Land Restoration. The Recreation account includes State and Local Parks, Trails, Water Access sites and State Land Development.

How does the Legislature Determine the WWRP Budget?

The Governor submits the RCO's ranked list of projects to the Legislature, along with a requested funding level in the Capital Budget. The legislature reviews the list and passes the final budget. Because the legislation that implements the Capital Budget requires a 60% vote, the WWRP requires bipartisan support.

Can Projects be Added or Removed from the List?

Once the RCO ranks the projects, the Governor and Legislature may remove projects, but they cannot add them or rearrange the list. If a project is not welcome in a community then the legislators from that district can remove it from the list by signing a request.

Is there Monitoring and Accountability?

After the legislature approves the ranked lists and the capital budget, the RCO enters into contracts with applicants to complete the projects. This rigorous process provides accountability, establishes timelines for project completion, sets requirements for the long-term protection of the site and ensures only the highest quality projects are funded.

How does the WWRP Leverage Matching Funds?

To date the WWRP has leveraged $420 million in matching funds from local agencies. They are required to match WWRP grants by 50%, doubling the state's investment. By providing the match required for federal programs like the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Washington received 39% of federal endangered species conservation funds in 2006. This could not have happened without the availability of WWRP funds.

About the Coalition

What's the Role of the Coalition?

The Coalition is a nonprofit citizens group that leverages public funds for new state and local parks, wildlife habitat and farmland preservation. In 1989, the Coalition persuaded the state legislature to create the WWRP grant program. Since then the Coalition has served as the program's watchdog and worked to secure legislative funding for WWRP projects. Because of the work of the Coalition, children can play in more parks and ball fields, hunters, anglers and hikers have more access to our great outdoors, and more habitat for fish and wildlife is safe for future generations.

What has the Coalition Accomplished?

The Coalition has successfully advocated for over $620 million in state funds for WWRP projects. This money leveraged an additional $420 million in local matching funds. The WWRP has funded more than 1000 projects, encompassing over 350,000 acres of parks, ball fields and wildlife habitat across the state. This means more soccer fields for our children, more state parks for our families, better habitat for fish and wildlife and an improved quality of life for our state's citizens.

Why is the Coalition Effective?

The Coalition is a diverse group of over 270 businesses and organizations. Individuals representing a variety of interests including hunters, farmers, anglers, conservationists, timber companies, realtors and elected officials make up one of the most effective boards of directors in the state. The Coalition enjoys unparalleled success and bipartisan support. Former Governors Dan Evans and Mike Lowry co-chair the Board. Through the Coalition, businesses like Boeing, Weyerhaeuser and John L. Scott Real Estate, work hand in hand with non-profits such as The Nature Conservancy and Trout Unlimited to protect wildlife habitat and provide outdoor recreation opportunities.

How is the Coalition Funded?

The Coalition relies on charitable contributions from individuals, organizations and corporations. The Coalition does NOT receive any of the state funding it advocates for.

What are we Funding in Your Community?

Check our website to see lists of funded and proposed projects by city, county or district.

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