

Skagit Valley Herald

State Agency Lists Rec, Conservation Proposals

Ralph Schwartz, Skagit Valley Herald, September 26, 2008
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A nonprofit that lobbies for state support of land conservation and recreation projects sent a message to the Legislature on Thursday with its release of 115 grants it has “awarded,” including [seven in Skagit County](#) and [three in Island County](#).

The awards are far from final. For all 115 projects to be funded, the Legislature must provide the same \$100 million that it gave to the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office for grants in 2007.

Two budget sessions ago, in 2005, the Legislature appropriated \$50 million for the grants.

Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition spokeswoman Jill Wasberg said it will be difficult for the lobbying group to convince legislators to keep funding at 2007 levels, given that they also will be trying to close a budget gap estimated at \$3 billion.

“It’s going to be tough, we know that — especially to sustain the funding,” Wasberg said. “We have a pretty good portfolio of projects to show the Legislature, to show how important it is to keep it at \$100 million.”

The Recreation and Conservation Office has funded 46 projects in Skagit County since 1990, including \$300,000 for the Kiwanis Park in Mount Vernon in 2007.

[Grants for Skagit County projects](#) that have made the provisional cut in 2009 total more than \$7.1 million. Those include:

- [\\$2.5 million for the acquisition of 22 acres on Kiket Island as an area to view marine ecosystems;](#)
- [\\$2 million to add 75 acres to Deception Pass Park;](#)
- [\\$275,000 for a splash park and boardwalk at Kiwanis Park;](#)
- [\\$1.5 million for a half-mile trail on a new promenade in downtown Mount Vernon;](#)

- \$325,000 for improvements to Samish Overlook;
- \$246,000 for habitat improvements at Skagit Bay; and
- \$319,000 for preservation of 267 acres of farmland on Fir Island.

The three possible Island County grants add to more than \$4.7 million. Those include:

- \$4 million to acquire 54 acres of forest at Admiralty Inlet;
- \$673,000 to acquire 65 acres of farmland; and
- \$56,000 for improvements to 200 acres of park land.

The promenade trail in Mount Vernon and the Admiralty Inlet acquisition are at the bottom of the Recreation and Conservation Office's list of accepted applications, and they won't be funded if the Legislature reduces its support next year.

Mount Vernon Mayor Bud Norris said he was optimistic that the trail would be funded.

According to Norris, Gov. Chris Gregoire said at a recent breakfast for the Wildlife and Recreation Coalition that if re-elected she would support funding the grant program at \$100 million in her next budget.