



12 NCW Conservation Projects on Wish List

K.C. Mehaffey, Wenatchee World, October 4, 2008
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OLYMPIA — A state agency picked its top wildlife and recreation projects this week — including 12 in North Central Washington — but will have to wait until early next year to see if the state Legislature opts to fund them.

The [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program](#), which protects wildlife habitat and creates parks and trails, will seek about \$100 million altogether, including \$15.8 million for NCW projects.

But the Legislature currently anticipates a \$3.2 billion deficit and will be looking to make cuts in its two-year budget when it convenes in January.

Supporters are hopeful the program will be fully funded.

“It’s going to be tough, but we have [a lot of great projects to show off](#)” said Jill Washberg, spokeswoman for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition, a nonprofit group that raises money and lobbies for the projects.

She said considering the economy and gasoline prices, Washington may need to spend money on improving local recreation opportunities so residents can stay close to home for vacations and holidays.

Until the last biennium, the program had received about \$50 million a year since its inception in 1990, said Susan Zemek, spokeswoman for the state Recreation and Conservation Office, which used to be the Interagency on Outdoor Recreation.

She said at the last funding cycle, the Legislature recognized the program wasn’t keeping up with inflation, so it doubled the amount. “The governor has said publicly that she supports it at that level, but we don’t know what she’ll put in her budget,” she said.

Projects that made the list in North Central Washington range from acquisition of a Winthrop-area golf course and several other land purchases to riverfront conservation easements and recreation land improvements.

[A record number of projects](#) totaling \$272 million in requests were sought this year, and 115 of the 370 applications were selected.