



## Capital Budget Cuts Will Hit Local Parks, Environment

Callie White, Aberdeen Daily World, April 3, 2009  
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Cuts in the state capital budget are threatening funding for environmental preservation and parks projects in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties, says the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition.

The coalition lobbies for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, which funds local government spending on parks, wildlife habitat and farmland preservation projects.

With the statewide capital budget for the slashed from \$100 million to \$50 million, as is proposed in the Senate budget, seven projects of a total of nine in the Twin Harbors will be left to languish.

The House version of the budget proposes to cut \$20 million, which torpedoes four projects.

“With many of these projects, it’s now or never,” said Jill Wasberg, a spokeswoman for the program. There is no guarantee that the land will be available for purchase for some projects, she added.

Past projects the group has completed in the Twin Harbors include campground development in Grayland State Park, improving access to beaches in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties, developing the accessible Friends Landing Park in Montesano and Bishop Athletic Complex in South Aberdeen.

The group has also acquired coastline and land for state parks, Morrison Park in Aberdeen, Friends Landing near Montesano and 1,000 acres of the Elk River Estuary in the past.

Wasberg said the Twin Harbors would be disproportionately affected by the cuts. “You’ll have a lot of unfunded projects,” she said.

Projects that would be cut under either the Senate or House budgets include:

- Restoration of Elk River recreation area, protecting about 1,000 acres of salt marsh and freshwater wetlands.

- Preservation along the Bone and Niawiakum rivers in Pacific County, which the grant program says is “among the highest quality examples remaining of coastal salt marsh communities in Washington.”
- Land acquisition of 166 acres adjacent to Loomis Lake State Park near Long Beach.
- Protection of 870 feet of waterfront dunes on the Long Beach Peninsula. Additional projects that would be cut under the \$50 million Senate budget, but would be funded in the \$80 million House budget, include:
  - Restoration of five acres of shoreline and riparian areas along the Chehalis River in Grays Harbor County.
  - Purchase of 403 acres of “critical parts” of the Chehalis River surge plain, including pockets along Preachers and Blue sloughs. The purchase would complete a preserve to protect juvenile salmon, other fish, birds and other animals.
  - Violet meadow maintenance to improve habitat for the Oregon Silverspot butterfly, a species considered threatened by the federal government.

Both budgets will permit these projects:

- New field lights and electrical service to four baseball and softball fields at Pioneer Park in Aberdeen.
- Restoration of 185 acres of wetland on John’s River.