



Senate Budget Would Cut Six NCW Wildlife Recreation Projects

KC Mehaffey, Wenatchee World, April 3, 2009
April 03, 2009

WENATCHEE — A Beebe Springs restoration project and improvements to a Columbia River boat launch south of Wenatchee would not be funded under the state Senate's plan to cut the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

The two are among six in North Central Washington that would not get funds with the Senate's budget proposal to cut the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program to \$50 million.

The House of Representatives has proposed to fund the program at \$80 million, leaving funds for both the Beebe Springs restoration and Colockum boat launch, plus the purchase of habitat in the Methow Valley. A total of nine NCW projects totaling more than \$8.5 million are funded under the House plan, and six projects that cost more than \$5 million would get money under the Senate's proposal.

Two years ago, the state funded \$100 million in projects for the next two years, a jump from \$50 million in the previous biennium.

Jill Washberg, spokeswoman for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition, said her group anticipated cuts, but will push to get the \$80 million level of funding in a final budget.

"There are so many good projects, and a lot of them drop off if we go down to \$50 million," she said.

The Coalition lobbied for \$100 million to fund 115 wildlife and recreation projects around the state.

With cuts, the House version would fund 94 projects. That drops to 62 in the Senate's budget plan, she said.

Both north central and south western Washington are hard hit with the Senate's proposed cuts, she said.

"There are such huge swaths of wild land, the habitat projects are incomparable to other parts of the state," Washberg said. She said if the funds don't come through this year, the property may not be available in two years to buy. "That's the thing about land acquisition. It could be a now or never thing," she said.

WWRP projects, cut and funded

Cut under Senate but funded under House budget

- Beebe Springs: restore a rearing area, native plants and islands for salmon on the Columbia River near Beebe Springs, \$250,000
- Colockum: improves, develops and improves the only public boat launch on the west side of the Columbia River between Wenatchee and Vantage, \$284,358
- Methow critical habitat: conserves a large block of sharp-tailed grouse habitat in the upper Methow Valley, \$3.5 million.

Funded under both House and Senate budgets:

- Northern Douglas County shrub-setppe restoration, converts 413 acres of agriculture land into quality wildlife habitat, \$249,812
- Methow: farmland conservation, riparian easement on 80 acres of farmland in the lower Methow Valley, \$395,908
- Nelson Ranch: farmland preservation, protects over 1,000 acres of rangeland in the Okanogan Highlands from development, \$616,050.
- Pearrygin Lake: constructs a new park entrance, parking areas, picnic shelter, trails playground and restrooms at Pearrygin Lake State Park north of Winthrop, \$1 million
- Pearrygin Lake: buys property in the Bear Creek area to add to Pearrygin Lake State Park near Winthrop, \$2 million
- Sinlahekin: uses fire to restore landscape in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area in Okanogan County, \$778,632

Cut under both House and Senate budgets:

- Pogue Mountain: thins 700 acres of forests in Okanogan County to promote

wildlife and biodiversity and limit wildfire, \$328,800

- Similkameen: protects a wildlife corridor that links the Cascades and the Rockies, \$4.6 million.
- McLoughlin Falls: secures 800 acres of wildlife habitat including 150 acres of riparian lands on the Okanogan River, \$1,821,050

Source: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition