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Conservation, Recreation Projects in Whatcom County Could Get \$1.2 Million From State

By Kie Relyea
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Three recreation and conservation projects in Whatcom County are in line to receive about \$1.2 million through the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

If approved by Gov. Chris Gregoire, the funding would be used to replace a dock at Lake Terrell, preserve farmland, and help pay for the county's share of acquiring Lily Point in Point Roberts to save it from future development.

About \$325,000 also has been slated for improvements at Samish Overlook in Skagit County, including links to area trails and an observation terrace. The overlook is hugely popular with hikers, mountain bikers and hang gliders living in Whatcom County.

The local dollars are among the \$70 million the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program will receive in the 2009-2010 biennium through the state capital budget.

The projects are funded by state-issued bonds.

The program received \$100 million in the last biennium.

"We took a 30 percent cut, but in this economy that's still a huge accomplishment for everyone," said Jill Wasberg, spokeswoman for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition.

The proposed funding would pay for 95 projects for parks, trails, wildlife habitat and farmland preservation throughout the state.

Whatcom County projects and the dollar amounts are:

- \$530,990 to the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Department for its share of the second phase acquisition of Lily Point, which is seen as ecologically vital for Whatcom County and the entire region. The Nature Conservancy and Whatcom Land Trust led the way in acquiring 246 acres, including tidelands, at Lily Point, then turned the acres over to Whatcom County for the new Lily Point Marine Reserve.

County parks and recreation had asked for \$1 million.

- \$324,600 to Department of Fish & Wildlife to remove a 36-year-old float and replace it with a new fishing pier that's also accessible to the disabled at Lake Terrell, located west of Ferndale.
- A new parking area and toilet that meets requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act also are part of the project.
- \$379,750 to the Whatcom County Purchase of Development Rights Program to preserve farmland by buying the rights to build houses on one farm in the northern part of the county, halfway between Blaine and Lynden.