



PORT TOWNSEND & JEFFERSON COUNTY

LEADER

EDITORIAL: Protecting Wildlife, Recreation and Farms Program a Good Idea

Port Townsend Leader
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As we turn the corner on the new year, the state Legislature will be gaveled to order. This year, as in most recent years, our representatives will be grappling with big needs and small budgets.

We all know what that means – new revenue proposals and cuts to important programs.

While there are many vital needs that deserve attention, the Legislature should carefully preserve and protect the process of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. The WWRP is a state grant program funded from the capital construction budget that awards grants for preservation of lands for wildlife and fish habitat, farms and outdoor recreation.

Watching over this grant program is the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition, an entirely nonprofit, volunteer group representing more than 250 organizations and businesses. The coalition serves as a watchdog and advocate for the WWRP grant program, receives no funding from the state, but provides that broad consensus that makes this the least political process in the state. Thanks to the coalition, the grant requests ultimately approved by the Legislature have a bipartisan stamp of approval.

If you find that hard to believe, just track the program's performance and you will find a process based on merit and impact, not political machinations.

It's hard to find another state program that works so well and benefits communities so directly. Created nearly 25 years ago, the program has proven its value and efficacy. The Legislature would do well to protect and nurture it.