



EDITORIAL: Coalition Helps Preserve State's Quality of Life

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In an era of increasingly partisan politics, the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition brings together people from across the political spectrum with a common purpose — to promote public funding for parks, wildlife and agricultural lands.

Last week, the coalition held its annual fundraising breakfast and the bipartisan nature of the event was apparent. The table I was assigned to included Bob Bugert of the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, Congressman Dave Reichert, Rep. Andy Hill, R-Redmond, and John Roskelley, a Democratic county commissioner from Spokane and world-renowned climber.

From the outset, the coalition was intended to transcend partisan politics. It was conceived by former governors Dan Evans and Mike Lowry to safeguard the quality of life of Washington state.

This year, the coalition was successful in getting \$65 million from the state for projects, including a number in North Central Washington. The program funded \$1.8 million for the Camas Meadows Natural Area, \$257,000 for Cashmere Riverside Park, \$286,000 to acquire land near Castle Rock which will provide public access to that iconic area, \$950,000 for shrub-steppe habitat improvement, \$1.25 million to protect land in the Stemilt Basin, \$365,000 for a trail in Winthrop, \$995,000 for an ice rink in Winthrop, \$2.7 million for acquisitions in upper Dry Gulch and \$3.1 million for the extension to the Apple Capital Recreation Loop Trail.

These projects are funded on a competitive basis that are not subject to legislative maneuvering, which is the responsible way to handle public funds.

There are those who think government has no business funding these kinds of projects. Fortunately, there is a long history of broad-based support for investing in parks, open space, wildlife enhancement and recreational improvements.

The quality of life of this state is the most precious thing to be preserved.

