



Money For Things That Last

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You don't make much news fiddling with appropriations to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. You can double the appropriation, from \$50 million to \$100 million, spend more than even a spending-prone governor requested, and barely make a bullet point deep in somebody's legislative roundup.

That may be because its part of the capital construction budget, which is one of the trio of state budgets passed every other year. At about \$4 billion it isn't much more than a 10th of the operating budget, which is the \$33 billion monster everyone argues about most of the time. It is bit more than half the transportation budget, which involves much dickering over billions for asphalt. The capital budget is far less controversial; you could even call it genuinely bipartisan. Its small, but significant if you judge by bang for the buck. It makes things that last, the things you notice and use, like schools and universities. It is the states investment in bricks and mortar. And, occasionally, dirt.

This year, the fortunate appropriations again had an impact on Wenatchee, where the city has received notice it will receive \$172,000 for projects related to the Foothills Trail. The appropriation will be doubled by local matching funds and in-kind donations raised by the energetic Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, to build trailheads and parking at Horse Lake Road and Day Road, and 4.1 miles of trail to link the two.

This money comes from the Wildlife and Recreation Program. The appropriation to this fund was doubled in this years budget, the first major increase since 1990. The grants are issued by the states Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation, an unfortunately named but important agency charged with sorting through the many funding requests. A substantial share goes for recreational facilities, like state and local parks Rotary Park in Wenatchee, Lakeside Park in Chelan, Peshastin Pinnacles are local examples from past budgets. More goes to preserve and restore wildlife habitat.

The impact of these investments the proper term for this accumulation of assets can be profound, lasting for generations. The Foothills Trail has that potential.

The trail will provide lasting public access to the large and often spectacular swath of open sage-and-grassland that rings Wenatchee. The trail has existed unofficially for years but now has formal recognition and support from state and local government. This is the first major grant for the trail, and this section is just one part of a hoped-for extensive community trail system ringing Wenatchee and connecting to public lands beyond.

It now appears this trail dream, the big picture, is likely to come true, and beat the otherwise inexorable march of development and land consumption. This will accomplish two important things for Wenatchee, benefits to enjoy even if you never set a boot on the trail. One is preservation of open space, the views, the scenery. This gives our community its look and feel, which makes a contribution to our quality of life that can hardly be underestimated. Its why many of us choose to live here. The second is a recreational asset a beautiful trail system so close to the city it is only minutes away. Few places in the United States have such appealing amenities, and that is paying off, even now.

Lasting good comes from small appropriations, given enough sense and foresight. We are seeing it here.

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