

Introduction

Our connection to the outdoors is embedded in the culture of the Pacific Northwest. The splendor of our natural environment beckons us, defines us, and sustains us. The outdoors are a fundamental part of our unique identity.

As our population continues to grow, it is imperative that we protect and create more access to nature. If we don't conserve our lands now, our natural landscapes, parks, farms, and forests will disappear forever. We will jeopardize the places that define our communities and improve our lives.

But, not all Washingtonians have benefitted equally from outdoor recreation and conservation projects in the past. A community's recreation opportunities should not be limited by geography, demographics, size, or wealth.

Robust and reliable state funding is critical to making this happen—and that doesn't happen without consistent and continued outreach, education, and advocacy.

The Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition (WWRC) led the creation of the Washington Wildlife & Recreation Program (WWRP) in 1990 to “acquire as soon as possible the most significant lands for wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation purposes before they are converted to other uses...and meet the needs of present and future generations.”

This state-funded and -managed grant program funds local outdoor recreation and conservation projects across the state, from local parks and playfields to wildlife habitat and working farms. Since its creation in 1990, it has leveraged over \$1.5 billion in funding for over 1400 projects, from Mount Si outside Seattle, to the Centennial Trail in Spokane, to Cowiche Canyon near Yakima.

But it's not the same program as it was in 1990. The Coalition has been there every step of the way, recommending solutions and advocating for support in the legislature to ensure the Program remains a strong and vibrant program serving all Washingtonians.

Every two years when the legislature tackles the capital budget, this nationally recognized grant program is under threat. Without the concerted effort of WWRC, it would diminish or fade away. Without the Coalition's broad reach and bipartisan approach, communities would lose this effective tool for achieving their local projects. Our state would lose the program that invests in a sustainable future for all Washingtonians.

Today, the Coalition works to ensure the WWRP and other grant programs serve as many communities throughout Washington as possible through community outreach and legislative advocacy. We also work improve the equity of such programs, in law and in practice.

Leading with our Mission, Vision & Values

Tribal Recognition

The Coalition would like to acknowledge that the work we do in Washington is done on occupied land. Since time immemorial many Indigenous nations, including the 29 federally recognized Tribes in Washington and those not yet recognized, have cared for and called this land home. We are deeply grateful to these Tribes for their lasting protection of the lands and waterways on which we work, play, learn, and organize today.

Mission

Creating a greener, healthier, more equitable, and better Washington for all through community outreach, network building, and advocacy for conservation and outdoor recreation funding.

Our Vision

We envision a Washington where:

- Every community benefits from the mental, physical, and economic health benefits of outdoor recreation and land conservation.
- Every resident is able to play in and enjoy nature—whether that's out their backdoor or in the backcountry.
- The natural beauty and interconnected ecosystems that makes our state so special and unique are preserved for future generations of humans and animals alike.

Our Theory of Change

WHY?

All communities deserve to have safe and accessible outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities. But such projects need reliable and robust funding. Conserving and restoring land is expensive and reliant on solid financial planning. Outdoor recreation opportunities are not readily accessible to everyone and updating obsolete and unsafe equipment is costly.

The WWRP and other government grant programs provide a critical solution to these challenges, providing a reliable matching funding source for communities regardless of their size, location, or political connections—but only if communities are aware of and able to take advantage of the opportunities. And only if the program receives enough funding.

That's where we come in.

The Spruce Railroad Trail, a universally accessible, multipurpose trail shared by hikers, bicyclists, equestrians, and people traveling in wheelchairs. (Clallam County)



FOR WHOM?

All Washingtonians—urban, rural, wealthy, poor, young, old—should have ready access to outdoor recreation opportunities. At the same time, we must preserve habitat areas—throughout the state, on land and water—so plants and animals continue to thrive despite growing human populations and increased use of resources. And we must continue to grow the outdoor recreation economy so businesses and our state can continue to thrive.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The Coalition is made up of a diverse, bipartisan collection of businesses, nonprofit organizations, and individuals—including backcountry hunters, small farm owners, wildlife conservation organizations, hiking groups, state agencies, and more. It is rare to get such disparate groups to agree on something, but the Coalition does just that—building consensus around the importance of preserving the treasured landscapes, parks, farms, trails, and habitat we all love and depend on.

RESULTS

We will measure our success by the level of public and legislative support for habitat and outdoor recreation and the equitable availability and distribution of grants and resources among all Washingtonians.

TIME FRAMES

Due to the nature of politics and the ever-changing demands on our state budget, we never see a time when our efforts will be unnecessary, however, we expect our role will continue to evolve in future years.

Our current efforts are based on the state's two-year budget cycle. We focus on advocacy during budget years and education and outreach in off-years, although the effort to build public support and innovative partnerships is a common thread no matter the year.

Core Values

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN

WWRC fuels the visions of communities across our state. We don't prescribe solutions, but provide resources and connections. We empower all communities to achieve their outdoor recreation and conservation dreams. Through our work, we ensure equitable recreation opportunities for everyone in Washington, forever and always.

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

Diversity and inclusion provide richness and strength. We strive to bring Washingtonians together across racial, ethnic, socio-economic, gender, sexual orientation, age, and ability differences to protect our natural world and make it equally accessible and build a sense of belonging for everyone. Where communities have been traditionally underserved, we work with them to find equitable solutions within the system, advocate for changes, and help develop extraordinary partnerships to achieve the community vision.

We embrace this value, but also recognize that we have not always—and do not currently—embody this value in our board or membership. We commit to developing an action plan to rectify this within our organization and working in partnership to address issues in the

sector as well.

BIPARTISANSHIP AND BREADTH

The Coalition is bipartisan and broadly representative of all Washingtonians. Rural and urban. Business leaders and community activists. Hunters, anglers, and environmentalists. Farmers, ranchers, and urban gardeners. Soccer moms and mountaineers.

LEAVE WASHINGTON BETTER THAN WE FOUND IT

In all things we do, we seek to improve—to leave things better than we found them. This is true for our environment, for habitat for our plants and animals, and for every community in Washington. We work to make Washington of tomorrow even better than the Washington of today.

Operating Values

PEOPLE FIRST

We have positive working relationships and always assume best intentions. We care about and help each other whenever possible.

FOCUS ON EQUITY

We recognize that our work and social systems are built on inequity and we work individually and collectively to bring about change. We commit to making it a common practice to center equity in every decision.

RECOGNIZE, RESPECT & VALUE DIFFERENCES, BUILDING A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVITY.

We recognize the value of different views, perspectives, and lived experiences within our team and welcome—and seek out—opportunities to expand our own.

ENCOURAGING GROWTH & BREAKING THE STATUS QUO

Just because something has always been done one way, doesn't mean that's always the best way. We commit to questioning decisions, being proactive, and looking for new ideas and new ways to do things, in our day to day work and in pursuing our mission.

COLLABORATION

Our work is better and more effective when we involve more voices in the decision-making process. More ideas are explored. Better conclusions are reached. We commit to establishing a collaborative—rather than siloed—work structure within our team.

IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE WORK

We are all human beings and have meaning beyond our work product. As a team, we encourage and respect work-life balance. We are friendly, have fun, and find humor in our work whenever possible.

Strategic Priorities

We have three strategic priorities which will guide our work in the coming years, each with a series of supporting goals and strategies. The common thread throughout all of them is a commitment to unifying and magnifying the voices of communities and outdoor recreation enthusiasts throughout the state.

Our priorities are:

1. Protect and Expand Public Lands
2. Support Efforts to Increase Access, Especially for Underserved Communities
3. Build a Bigger & Stronger Coalition

Increase Conservation and Recreation Lands in Washington

Goal 1: Secure strong funding for the Washington Wildlife & Recreation Program and protect the process

The WWRP is the heart of our work and our reason for existence. We remain faithful stewards of the program, advocating for funding and building support. The WWRP is nationally recognized for its fair and competitive process, ensuring the best and most prepared projects are funded, free of political of political machinations and favoritism—and we work to ensure this remains true.

Success will be demonstrated by public, gubernatorial, and legislative support for wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation, and through maintained integrity of the WWRP process.

STRATEGY 1: BUILD SUPPORT FOR THE WWRP WITHIN THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE AND THE LEGISLATURE

The Coalition has traditionally benefited from strong support within the Governor's office, but this has not happened naturally. Rather, it is the result of extensive relationship building and advocacy efforts, both with existing office holders and potential future ones.

Likewise, robust funding for the WWRP does not happen without extensive effort. Working with Coalition members and with our partner, the WWRC Action Fund, the Coalition must continue to build champions within the Legislature.

Example tactics include:

- Build relationships w/ current staff & Governor, as well as potential future Gubernatorial candidates

Visiting Bremerton's Evergreen Rotary Park Inclusive Playground with Senator Emily Randall (D-Bremerton)



Visiting the "Heart of the Cascades" with Rep. Tom Dent (R-Moses Lake)



- Build relationships all Legislators, with special focus on current and future leadership, developing and leveraging board member relationships wherever possible
- Build relationships with next-generation of state leaders, including county commissioners and other local elected officials
- Project Tours & Education
- Direct lobbying efforts (mostly through sister organization, WWRC Action Fund)
- Grassroots lobbying & public awareness campaigns
- Earned media & op-ed placements

Goal 2: Encourage good stewardship of public lands, especially those acquired and developed through the WWRP

Acquiring lands or developing trails is only one step in the lifecycle of public lands. Our land management agency partners must also be funded and empowered to take care of these lands and waters, not just for human use, but as the core of our ecosystem.

While they all do as best they can in current circumstances, they are routinely underfunded for ongoing land management work—from funding for trail and park maintenance to wildfire mitigation and recovery. The Coalition will explore opportunities to encourage long-term funding and planning for stewardship at all levels.

Kalama Falls, Merrill Lake Unit Cowlitz County



STRATEGY 1: SUPPORT OPERATING FUNDING NEEDS OF AGENCIES

Example tactics:

- Work with agency partners to understand their budget requests and identify opportunities for Coalition support of relevant portions.
- Participate in workgroups focused on increasing overall support for operations funding for outdoor recreation and conservation.

STRATEGY 2: ESTABLISH A SHARED DEFINITION AND METRIC FOR STEWARDSHIP

Example tactics:

- Facilitate the development of and implementation of an interagency ecological integrity tool for successful public land stewardship.

- Participate in other efforts to unify outdoor recreation users around ongoing stewardship and maintenance needs.

Steptoe Butte
Whitman County



Support Efforts to Increase Access, Especially for Underserved Communities

Goal 1: Expand participation in the WWRP grant program

Our vision, outlined above, is ambitious and embraces the interconnectedness of our communities and our wildlife. We believe the WWRP is the best tool available for achieving that vision for our state. Furthermore, we can best demonstrate demand for—and the need for investment in—the program by encouraging extensive and expansive participation from across the state. Despite the great contribution the WWRP especially has made across the state, there remain communities who have not been able to take advantage of the program. Educating these communities about the opportunities available will help empower them to fulfill their outdoor recreation dreams.

However, knowledge is only one factor impeding participation, especially in urban communities of color and smaller rural communities. By listening and learning about the challenges they face, we can work with the communities to break down barriers, advocate for needed changes, and develop tools and resources to help them participate. From pro bono grant writing partnerships to a resource database, the possibilities are expansive.

All of this work will be undertaken in partnership with the state’s Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), which manages the WWRP process.

STRATEGY 1: EDUCATE AND ENCOURAGE COMMUNITIES—ESPECIALLY COMMUNITIES OF COLOR AND OTHER TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES—TO APPLY FOR WWRP FUNDING

Example tactics:

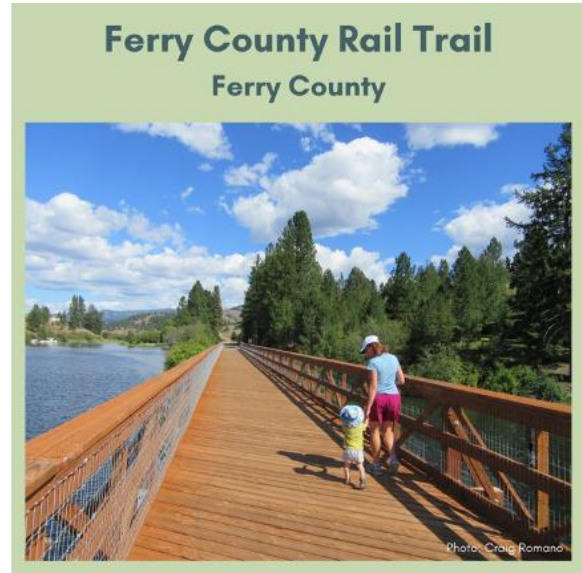
- Meetings and information sessions
- Project tours
- Community partner outreach

STRATEGY 2: PARTNER WITH THE RCO TO IDENTIFY NEEDS AND PROVIDE THE TOOLS NECESSARY FOR UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE



Example tactics:

- Conduct listening tour to learn the challenges facing communities and potential solutions
- Support funding for an Equity Grant Program within RCO
- Explore other opportunities to support planning and outreach assistance for communities
- Develop resource database for applicants
- Create pro bono support connections
- Connect members to share lessons learned



Goal 2: Ensure the WWRP continues to best serve Washington

Washington of today is different from Washington in 1989. And the WWRP of today is different than the WWRP of 1990. As the state continues to evolve, so must the program. The Coalition should remain an active participant in all efforts to modernize the program—and should itself encourage modernization efforts when and if the need is identified.

STRATEGY 1: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PROCESSES AND POLICIES AND/OR THE ADAPTATION OF EXISTING ONES, WHEN NEEDED

Example Tactics:

- Work with RCO to identify opportunities to streamline the application and reporting process
- Participate in program and/or category review workgroups (e.g. match reduction workgroup, Urban Wildlife Habitat category review workgroup, etc.)
- Independently encourage improvements, when needed

Goal 3: Encourage the funding of programs that help people engage with public lands

When discussing park development or land acquisition, we must never lose fact that we are preserving Washington's great outdoors not just for their inherent worth, but also for the benefit of our communities for generations to come. Therefore, encouraging support for programs that develop human-nature connections will advance our cause on all fronts.

Seattle Kubota Gardens King County



STRATEGY 1: BUILD NEW CONNECTIONS

Example Tactics:

- Advocate for No Child Left Inside and similar programs that help build connections to the outdoors, especially for traditionally underserved groups.

STRATEGY 2: INCREASE ACCESS TO THE OUTDOORS

Example Tactics:

- Share resources around Trailhead Direct, library Discovery Pass opportunities, and similar programs that increase access to the outdoors.

Build a Bigger & Stronger Coalition

Goal 1: Deepen and expand our engagement with organizations & people

A Coalition is only as strong as its membership. Therefore, we must always remain active in recruiting more organizations and people to the cause at all levels.

Multi-Partner Tour of the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie with Rep. Bill Ramos (D-Issaquah)



STRATEGY 1: PURSUE NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS, USER GROUPS, AND BUSINESSES

Example tactics:

- Develop strong messaging
- Demonstrate importance of the outdoors for various groups
- Demonstrate the return on investment
- Demonstrate the intersection of the outdoors and other issues (health, economy, etc.)

STRATEGY 2: IMPROVE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

Example tactics:

- Redesign membership program to better engage

members

- Consider how best to engage smaller organizations and those representing marginalized communities as members (incl. consideration for financial constraints)
- Consider creating opportunities for more networking & engagement, including a potential summit or conference

STRATEGY 3: IMPROVE BOARD RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

Example tactics:

- Develop ongoing strategy around recruitment and leadership development in alignment with Goal 2, below.
- Institute succession planning for officer and other positions
- Implement board cohorts
- Implement board mentoring
- Explore possible alternative board structures, including creation of advisory boards, and term limits

Goal 2: Ensure the Coalition is representative of Washington today

A Coalition must also be representative of the people it serves, and Washington is becoming ever more diverse. We must not lose sight of traditional recreationalists, but we cannot disregard the changing face of our state—and of recreation in our state. We must also take stock of our position of privilege and find ways to address historical inequities and discrimination through our work—including any our organization may have unintentionally contributed to.

STRATEGY 1: IMPROVE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI), AND SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK DONE WITHIN THE COALITION

Example tactics:

- Develop a strong DEI statement, and plan for improvements going forward
- Consider racial, ethnic, gender, and age diversity metrics when evaluating potential new board members.
- Prioritize DEI in staff recruiting and hiring
- Develop mutually beneficial relationships with organizations serving diverse parts of Washington
- Recognize and work to correct any ways in which our work has perpetuated historical wrongs, especially to indigenous cultures and people of color.
- Promote representation and equity for those who have been underrepresented in the outdoors—especially those who experience barriers to participation—including people of color, the queer community, people with disabilities, etc.
- Use our platform and network to break down traditional biases and support and encourage initiatives that move beyond “welcoming” people to the outdoors to helping create a sense of belonging.



STRATEGY 2: MAINTAIN BROAD REPRESENTATION WITHIN COALITION

Example tactics:

- Ensure the board and membership demonstrates diversity in all ways, including ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, geography, and political affiliations.
- Ensure representation from a wide variety of outdoor recreation interests (hunting/angling, biking, mountaineering, farming, hiking, horses, etc.).
- Build recognition and respect around a broad definition of “outdoorsy”

Goal 3: Improve the financial integrity of the Coalition

As important as all of the above is—and it is vital—it cannot be achieved without financial security within the organization. We must ensure the Coalition is managed in a fiscally-sound manner, that sustains its work into the future.

STRATEGY 1: CONTINUE TO PRIORITIZE COST-EFFECTIVE OPERATING MEASURES.

Example tactics:

- Seek in-kind donations for expenses when possible
- Seek multiple bids for new contracts
- Remain cost-conscious with expenses, but avoid excess thrift, especially when it leads to increased staff time expenditures, etc.
- Regularly evaluate staff compensation and benefits to ensure we remain a competitive employer
- Encourage work-life balance to maintain employee health and wellness

STRATEGY 2: CONTINUE TO ADAPT FUNDRAISING STRATEGIES TO CHANGING REALITIES IN THE SECTOR AND OUR OWN PRIORITIES

Example tactics:

- Regularly consider updates to sponsorship, membership, and other fundraising mechanisms to keep up-to-date with changing realities
- Evaluate the efficacy of existing fundraising campaigns and consider alternatives
- Recruit board members and other supporters willing to engage their networks in our mission

