

Blue Ribbon Parks and Outdoor Recreation Task Force  
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## August 19, 2014 Sequim Task Force Meeting Summary

The fifth of six task force meetings was held Tues, Aug 19 at the Holiday Inn Express in Sequim. The objectives were to discuss and reach consensus on priority recommendations. Earlier that afternoon, task force member and State Representative Steve Tharinger hosted a public listening session. The purpose was to share examples of successful local parks and outdoor recreation programs with members. The gathering is summarized below on page 6.

State Rep. Steve Tharinger and Bert Wirta, CEO of Wirta Hospitality Worldwide and operator of Sequim's Holiday Inn Express welcomed members to the Olympic Peninsula. The task force meeting was well attended: Fifteen of the 17 voting members participated (Connor Inslee and Ben Klasky were unable to attend), along with 8 of 12 non-voting members and at least 30 members of the public.

From the 20 public comments given, the following key themes emerged: (1) support for recreational fishing; (2) support for eliminating the Discover Pass; and (3) support for the Maritime Tourism bill. Visit the [task force Web page](#) for the meeting summary.

### Key Outcomes

- **Task force priority recommendations begin to coalesce.** The insights and priorities gathered from the small group discussions and roundtable remarks provide solid direction for Recreation and Conservation Office staff as they prepare the draft and final reports.
- **20 public comments gathered**, representing Olympic Peninsula residents, small business owners, avid outdoorsmen and women, and outdoor recreation advocacy groups.

### RCO Staff Updates

**Report outline, schedule and process** (Jim Fox): Recreation and Conservation Office staff continue work on the draft report, incorporating recommendations submitted by the four task force subcommittees in mid-July, and the thousands of public comments gathered since April. The draft report will be distributed to members and posted on the [task force Web page](#) for a 10-day public comment period beginning Tues, Aug 26. The draft report is due to the Governor Thurs, Sep 4 and the final by Fri, Sep 19.

**Task Force Priority Recommendations Survey** (Meg O'Leary): Highlights include:

- 17 of 29 task force members (58%) participated
- Top 3 priorities overall
  - Option 1 – Grow: Designate “outdoor recreation / tourism” as a specific industry cluster. (82%)
  - Option 1 – Lead: Designate a state liaison, with staff if necessary. (76%)
  - Option 4 – Grow: Increase and better coordinate the promotion of Washington's many, diverse recreation opportunities in order to attract more travelers from overseas, across the nation and within Washington. (76%)

- Revenue priorities
  - 1st choice, Revenue Option A: Focus on Vehicles, Watercraft Excise Tax and Discover Pass adjustment (35%)
  - 2nd choice, Revenue Option C: Eliminate the Discover Pass, but backfill and enhance with other revenue sources (24%)
  - 3rd choice, Revenue Option B: Focus on Litter Tax, Sales tax on Bottled Water and RV/Travel Trailer Excise Tax (18%)

### **Review & Discuss Recommendations**

Members gathered in six small groups to discuss and prioritize recommendations. Groups were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Based on what you have seen, heard and read to date, what are your small group's top recommendations for the final report?
2. Are there any recommendations that can be combined?
3. Is there anything missing from our meetings or comments that should be added to the draft report?

### **Small Group Report Back**

**Group 1 (Patty Graf-Hoke, facilitator):** We re-read the Governor's task force charter in relationship to the draft recommendations. We propose separating the draft recommendations into two parts: policies and funding. Many existing access issues could provide increased revenue and new economic development opportunities, but they are tied to policy changes. Felt strongly that the Governor's Office needs to take the lead on moving these policies forward, and establish a go-to person to answer ongoing questions and act as a liaison at the federal level. Consolidate separate recommendations for youth, military and underserved; it should be a single "families" category. It's about providing access for families to increase outdoor recreation. Give more consideration to public-private funding opportunities because there just aren't enough state funds. If the Discover Pass is eliminated, we would support a 1% tax on bottled water. Leverage it with a "watering your parks" marketing campaign. Eliminating the Discover Pass would help increase tourism revenue.

**Group 2 (Jim Cahill, facilitator):** We endorse the first two survey recommendations (designate "outdoor recreation/tourism" as a specific industry cluster, and designate a state liaison, with staff if necessary) as high priorities, though they need to be fleshed out. When considering revenue, we need to ask what's politically and fiscally possible. We support Revenue Option B with variances. Emphasize access issues on state and federal lands. Incorporate environmental education into STEM. How can we use STEM and other existing programs to increase youth outdoor recreation and their connection to the environment?

**Group 3 (Dan Nordstrom, facilitator):** Two key themes: (1a) Funding is critical, because nothing will come of this effort without it. Consider a comprehensive Outdoor Economy initiative to roll up a group of funding mechanisms to cover the existing gap plus additional to create a best in class state outdoor recreation infrastructure, participation and tourism destination. (1b) Discover Pass is a failure. Number one mentioned issue to be fixed in public comments. There are many ways to sustain the revenue associated with a parking fee by improving the execution of the Discover Pass from a consumer's perspective. (2) Create an Office of Outdoor Economy and Recreation to sustain these task force efforts and priority issues over time. The new office should live at the Washington State Department of Commerce as a new sector because of the economic development, tourism, and inter-agency

coordination components. Designate one person who is accountable at the Governor's Office level for inter-agency coordination. There should be a board of advisors attached to this office to provide guidance, support and accountability. (3) Add outdoor curriculum requirement for K-12. This can be incorporated into existing STEM efforts where the outdoors becomes the basis of investigation, integrated with PE, or be added as a stand-alone.

**Group 4 (Spencer Olson, facilitator):** Focus on revenue sources. Modify Discover Pass, make the Discover Pass transferrable and more accessible, and create more incentives for its use. Bottled water tax could be a great source of revenue. Establish more information about outdoor recreation opportunities statewide. Designated a state liaison to support and grow our outdoor recreation resources.

**Group 5 (Louise Stanton-Masten, facilitator):** Established a new outdoor recreation division under the existing Recreation and Conservation Office to carry out goals of the task force. Need strong, visible, responsible staff. Re-establish No Child Left Inside and encourage grantees to seek matching funds. Establish outdoor recreation events with focus on underserved, diverse audiences in partnership with agencies and non-profit organizations. Integrate outdoor recreation into science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. Provide resources for schools to carry this out. Develop an outreach campaign within the military community focused on outdoor recreation benefits. What could the Veterans Administration do to help? Perhaps online resources? Provide a single pass for all outdoor recreation in the state. Use [www.experiencewa.com](http://www.experiencewa.com) to provide information on obtaining the single pass. Support a hybrid of revenue options, for example the \$5 fee on car registration and new vehicle purchase tax. Transaction fees should reflect inflation. Need funding for youth activities. Designate outdoor recreation as a specific industry cluster, and identify an agency who is responsible for overall coordination.

**Group 6 (Marc Berejka, facilitator):** Final report needs a short statement up front saying why this task force and their recommendations matter. For example, include stories from the Wenatchee listening session or task force members themselves. Include pictures and inspiring text to capture the reader's imagination. Remove barriers to outdoor recreation access. For the body of the report, boil down recommendations to create policy directions and strategies that have enduring, longer-term. In the appendix, include specific policy prescriptions and shorter-term priorities. Instead of focusing on the cost of charging people to get outside, think holistically about the benefits (e.g., not just in form of revenue from Discover Pass). Think about community, health, education and environmental benefits and values. The Discover Pass discourages outdoor recreation. Our current pass system is broken. Include Jim the three revenue options in the final report appendix. We propose 3 elements for the final report: 1) inspiration, 2) policy and strategies, and 3) options in appendix.

### **Emerging Themes & Priorities**

Full consensus was not reached, though the following common themes did emerge from the small group discussions. The Recreation and Conservation Office will use them, along with the task force subcommittee recommendations and public comment, as a guide in drafting the report. They include:

#### **Lead the Way to Outdoor Recreation**

- Designate an outdoor recreation advocate within a state agency
  - Focus on partnerships, coordination, tourism, access barriers, recreation information

#### **Inspire an Outdoor Recreation Culture**

- Provide more opportunities for youth and families
  - Underserved, low income, minorities, military

### **Fund Outdoor Recreation Facilities and Programs**

- State funding – 1% tax on bottled water, modify the Discover Pass
- Local funding – real estate excise tax, watercraft excise tax, Youth Athletic Facilities

### **Incorporate the Outdoors in Education**

- Require outdoors experience in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and physical education curriculum
- No Child Left Inside

### **Public Comment**

Comments are summarized and listed in the order presented at the meeting.

1. **John Albiso, Coastal Conservation Association:** Recreational fishing is a key industry and source of state revenue and economic development. Need to look to other states and B.C. and make recreational fishing a priority. Manage fisheries for long-term sustainability.
2. **Linda Palumbo, Straitside Resort / Clallam Bay Sekiu Chamber:** Sportfishing is a critical source of income for our families, businesses, and outfitters. Let's return this state to the world-class fishing destination it once was. Use license fees to support sportfishing.
3. **Pat Neal, Hoh River Guide Association:** People move to Sequim to fish and crab. People move from across the country to settle here. One measure of our quality of life is how we treat our children. Only place kids have to fish is a pond. Local rivers—Hoh and Dungeness—are closed to fishing. It's our right to harvest hatchery fish. Two lumber mills have closed down in the area. Discover Pass imposes too many fees.
4. **Scott Fink, area resident:** Grew up in the Sequim / Poulsbo area. Avid outdoorsman. Expand trails for trail bike and motorcycles and decrease restrictions. We bike in Oregon because they have fewer restrictions.
5. **Don Hoch, Washington State Parks:** Review the Governor's priorities for the task force, which include establishing a stable funding source for state parks. We're coming out with a new Discover Pass. There are at least 40 other states that have an annual pass. The pass supports many social services. The pass wasn't a failure; the legislators had unrealistic expectations.
6. **Tom Bugert, Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition:** Please consider including the following language in your report to Governor Inslee on the findings of the Task Force. We believe it is important for the task force to highlight the importance of existing strategies that make Washington a leader in our outdoor legacy: *"Protect and preserve nationally recognized outdoor recreation grant programs and enable them to keep pace with growth: Washington State already benefits from highly successful recreation grant programs such as the Boating Facilities Program, the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account, the Youth Athletic Facilities program; and the Non-highway Off-road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Program. Ensuring these programs keep pace with growing populations and rising real estate and costs will continue to yield economic, health and environmental benefits for Washington's citizens and visitors to our state."*
7. **Tom O'Keefe, American Whitewater:** Enhance our whitewater resources. Leverage public-private partnership opportunities. Agree that we should have a point person in the state for outdoor recreation. User fees are a barrier to getting outside. Private lands are important to outdoor access.

8. **Peter Schrappen, Northwest Marine Trade Association:** Support Marine Tourism bill; it's provides important support to rural areas. Consider gas tax dollars that aren't refunded. Protect this account. Discrepancy between gas tax dollars (lift the artificial lid). Create predictable fishing seasons.
9. **Paul Nursey, Tourism Victoria, British Columbia:** Collaborate regionally and drive more visitation for our mutual benefit in British Columbia, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. 30% of visitors to B.C. also visit other areas in Canada and the U.S., so we all benefit from investment for and improvements to outdoor recreation opportunities. Support border clearance.
10. **Andrew Stevenson, Peninsula Trails Coalition:** Funding for outdoor recreation in rural areas is decreasing. We need state non-motorized transportation system that connects network to better serve the people. Want people outdoors? We need better infrastructure.
11. **Dan Tatum, Olympic Peninsula Salmon Derby:** The Derby creates a great deal of business for local businesses. Sportfishing is a critical industry for local economy.
12. **Ryan Gedlund, Swain's General Store:** Fishing represents 8% of our annual sales. 90% of people are confused about the Discover Pass and where they're allowed to recreate, especially for recreational fishing and hunting.
13. **Brian Menkal, Brian's Sporting Goods:** Sequim is a hot spot for retirees. Recreational fishing is a key industry in our state. Fishing up here is what the film 'Twilight' is to Forks, WA in terms of economic development.
14. **Karen Ridings, Port Townsend Chamber of Commerce:** Support Maritime Tourism bill. Maritime industry and trades are critical to local livelihoods, economic development and tourism.
15. **Jim Heckmann, Gold Star Marin:** Support Maritime Tourism bill. When you engage in this effort, the economic development incentives are key. For example, when boats are repaired in Port Townsend, it generates economic benefits—jobs and support for other local businesses and suppliers.
16. **John Floberg, Washington State Parks Foundation:** Review the Governor's priorities for the task force, which include establishing a stable funding source for state parks. Ensure state parks are featured as springboard and foundation in the final report.
17. **Ed Bowen, west-end outer-coast resident:** Word about this task force process didn't come to us out here until yesterday. The outreach process has been ineffective. Task force Web site doesn't provide much material. Need to address the Governor's "north coast deed," number 683177, which relates to keeping property open to fishing and the agreement for interagency consultation and coordination in the event of any land management or access policy changes.
18. **Pearl Rains Hewett, area resident:** Our family has lived in Clallam County for over 90 years. State parks here are not affordable or friendly. Our family goes to Idaho to camp and fish because it's easier to recreate outside there. We've received tickets for not displaying the Discover Pass correctly.
19. **Larry Crockett, Port of Port Townsend:** Support Maritime Tourism bill. Recreation and Conservation Office boating accounts return important economic value to rural areas.
20. **Craig Hunter, local firewood lot owner:** Consolidate outdoor recreation passes. There are too many and it's confusing to people. Address the lack of public restrooms and showers; they need

to be attended and kept clean. Address lack of clear burn ban information. We just need one regulation, not multiple.

## Next Steps and Action

### Task Force Co-Chairs and Subcommittee Leads

- **Fri, Sep 5: Task Force member reimbursements are due:** Send the original signed reimbursement form along with receipts for July, August and September to [meg.oleary@rco.wa.gov](mailto:meg.oleary@rco.wa.gov). We are no longer accepting reimbursements prior to July 1, 2014.
- **Tues, Sep 16, 9:00-11:00 am:** Final Task Force meeting at the Mountaineers, 7700 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle.

### RCO and Consultant Partners

- Wed, Aug 20: Post meeting summary
- Tues, Aug 26: Distribute and post draft report for 10-day public comment period
- Thurs, Sep 4: Draft report due to the Governor
- Fri, Sep 19: Final report due to the Governor

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## August 19, 2014 Listening Session Summary

Task force member and State Rep. Steve Tharinger hosted an afternoon public listening session prior to the regular task force meeting. The purpose was to share examples of successful local outdoor recreation and tourism programs with members. The stories emphasized the incredible potential of leveraging Washington State's outdoor recreation resources for local and statewide benefit, and beyond. Twelve task force members attended, along with at least 15 citizens.

### Presentations

1. **Rich James, Clallam County Public Works / Olympic Discovery Trail.** Shared the story of the development of the [Olympic Discovery Trail](#). It spans 130 miles from Port Townsend to La Push. The trail is a major highway for non-motorized travelers, spanning the entire peninsula. There are plans to connect it to the Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle and eventually to points in eastern Washington.
2. **Michelle Little, North Olympia Discovery Marathon:** This [annual event](#) offers full and half marathon routes from Sequim to Port Angeles along Olympic Discovery Trail. Michelle cited statistics from '[Runners World](#)' about the benefit of creating and maintaining outdoor recreation opportunities for runners, including the obvious health benefits, money spent on equipment, support for local businesses, and the boost to local tourism revenue.
3. **Christina Pivarnik, City of Port Townsend:** Discussed development of the [Olympic Peninsula Tourism Commission](#), which is a cooperative. It is the marketing group representing the Olympia Peninsula and provides a wealth of information for residents and tourists alike, including places to stay, outdoor recreation destinations and local events.
4. **Dave Robison, Fort Worden State Park:** Discussed the steps in creating a Public Development Authority at [Fort Worden State Park](#). Fort Worden is an economic engine, though it is also the most expensive park in the state to maintain. There is a high maintenance obligation with the various elements, including historic buildings, camping, and conferences. State financial woes have stymied the ability to stay ahead of facility needs and operational development. Visitation

has remained fairly flat over the last 10 years, with the biggest decrease in 2011 coinciding with the implementation of the Discover Pass.

5. **Mary McCluskey, City of Poulsbo Parks & Recreation:** Support local parks operations and maintenance. We have 15 parks in Poulsbo that serve 10,000 residents, with only 2 maintenance staff. Our parks are a great economic development driver and we want this to continue. Limited tax base is challenge. Our repair and maintenance backlog is \$230,000. Reinforced the Washington Recreation & Parks Association recommendations to: Preserve existing dedicated fund for outdoor recreation; increase marketing for our outdoor recreation assets; re-establish Youth Athletic Facilities program; increase state and local funding for park maintenance and operation; and fix the artificial lid on how much revenue goes to the “non-highway purpose” dedicated accounts.
6. **Matt Tyler, Jefferson County Parks & Recreation:** We are dealing with closed campgrounds due to lack of funding for necessary capital improvements and maintenance backlog. Reinforced the Washington Recreation & Parks Association recommendations noted above.
7. **Doug Coutts, South Whidbey Parks & Recreation:** Our maintenance backlog is \$300,000, which represents 30% of our annual operating budget. We face a projected \$50,000 shortfall this year, yet we are asked to do same level or more of operation and maintenance with little money. Reinforced the Washington Recreation & Parks Association recommendations noted above.