Recreation in the backcountry is popular for Washingtonians. An estimated 11 percent of the population visits the forests and mountains annually to hike, bicycle, ride horses, cross-country ski, snowshoe, and ride motorcycles and off-road vehicles.

Trail systems are gaining in popularity across the country as a place for recreation, tourism, and economic development.

Washington’s trails plan estimated that trail users in the state have spent more than $3.4 billion on equipment, which generates tax revenues of $13 million to $27 million.

While trail and wilderness experiences are popular, budget cuts at all levels of government have made maintaining trails and places to ride off-road vehicles and keeping them open the public challenging.

In Washington, there are only three sports parks dedicated to off-road vehicle use in Washington — one each in Benton, Spokane, and Thurston Counties.

One of the sources of funding for non-motorized trails, camping, and off-road vehicle riding is the Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities program, which provides grants to develop and manage recreation opportunities for users of backcountry trails and non-highway roads. Grants may be used for planning, capital improvements, maintenance, operation, land acquisition, education, and law enforcement on trails.

Typical projects vary from development of trails and trail heads, to maintenance of intensive use areas, such as off-road vehicle sports parks.

The City of Richland used a $462,000 Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities grant to develop a campground and bathroom in the pit area near the motocross track in Horn Rapids ORV park.

Ensuring the Best Projects are Funded

The grant process is open and competitive. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board accepts applications every two years, in even-numbered years. Staff and citizen committees made of up experts in trail and off-road vehicle issues evaluate the projects and score them based on criteria established by the board. The committee submits a ranked list to the board for funding consideration.
Grant Recipients (1978-2011)

Anacortes
Benton County
Chelan County
Clallam County
Clark County
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
Darrington Community Club
DPS Technical Inc.
Eastmont
ESA Adolfson
Everett
Ferry County
Grant County
Grays Harbor County
Jefferson County
King County
Kitsap County
Kittitas County
Leavenworth
Long Beach
Mason County
North Bonneville
Othello
Pierce County
Port Angeles
Republic
Richland
San Juan County
Snohomish County
Spokane County
Tacoma Metropolitan Park District
Thurston County
Weston Solutions Inc.
Whatcom County
Yakima County
Walla Walla

Federal Agencies

- National Park Service
  - Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area
  - Mount Rainier National Park
  - North Cascades National Park
  - Olympic National Park
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
  - Columbia National Wildlife Refuge
- U.S. Forest Service
  - Colville National Forest
  - Gifford Pinchot National Forest
  - Mount Baker National Forest
  - Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
  - Okanogan National Forest
  - Olympic National Forest
  - Umatilla National Forest
  - Wenatchee National Forest

State Organizations

- Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Department of Natural Resources
- Recreation and Conservation Office
- State Parks and Recreation Commission
- University of Washington

The U.S. Forest Service’s Wenatchee National Forest used a $35,000 grant to maintain the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.