

## RECREATION TRAILS PROGRAM ANNUAL MEETING

Marguerite Austin began the meeting at 9:30 a.m. giving an overview of the agenda, and building safety information. The following Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Advisory Committee members either attended in person or participated by phone:

Name	City	Advisory Committee Position	Present
Doug Conner	Pasco	Motorcycle	No
Brian Crowley	Woodinville	Mountain bike	No
Kevin Farrell	Olympia	Hiking	Yes
Nikki Fields	Olympia	State agency/Land manager	Yes
Durlyn Finnie	Allyn	Citizen	Yes
Gerry Hodge	Olympia	Non-motorized Boating/Water trails	Yes
Ted Jackson	Monroe	All-terrain vehicle	Yes
Michael Jones	City of Blaine	Citizen	No
John Keates	Mason County	Local agency	No
Kristen Kuykendall	Olympia	State agency/Land manager	Yes
Ian Macek	Olympia	Department of Transportation	No
David McMains	Moses Lake	Four-wheel Drive	Yes
Dean Moberg	Federal Highway Administration	RTP Administrator	Yes
Gary Paull	Darrington	Federal agency/Land manger	No
Sandy Sternod	Kent	Snowmobile	No
Patricia Wible	Port Orchard	Equestrian	No

### Presentation giving overview of program

In June, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff brought this groups project recommendations to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. Marguerite reviewed what was shared at the board meeting. We are focused on reducing the maintenance backlog on our trails. Many of these trails are on National and State Lands. This program supports trails used for a variety of uses including ATV, Snowmobiles, Hiking, Horseback riding and more, including motorized and non-motorized recreation. Marguerite also reviewed who the eligible applicants are, the match required, grant amounts, and evaluation type. There were 77 applications this year, 59 in the general category and 18 in the education category. 51 of the applications in the general category were for maintenance on 6235 miles of trails. Marguerite also reviewed where the projects were located. The top ranked project this year was Grant #12-1294, Front Country Trail Maintenance 2013-14, for the Washington Trails Association. Marguerite shared parts of Laura Moxham's presentation to the board on this project. The Education category would fund 15.9 full time employees (FTE's) if all projects were funded. The top ranked education project was #12-1713, Cle Elum Winter Trail Patrol, with the Cle Elum Ranger District. That project would fund two snow rangers. Once the board gave the director authority, RCO funded 27 total projects, 20 for General and 7 for Education for a total of \$1,807,857 (\$1,770,488 in Federal Fiscal Year funds and \$37,369 in unused funds from previous years).

### 2012 Grant Cycle

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RCO has begun reviewing the last grant cycle survey comments on the process, materials, and challenges of a biennial grant cycle. They are also looking at the MAP 21 Summary. Kevin went to the conference in Phoenix, AZ and saw a wide variety of trails presentations from all over the world. They also reviewed MAP 21 funding and other funding avenues. The conference included day trips, hiking trips and work parties. Marguerite also attended. There were many attendees at the trails administrator meeting; two states opted out, Florida and (Kansas?). In Florida when residents found out the state opted out and did not put money towards trails, the people in the state got very upset. Now there are other options available for the funds if you opt out, like "Safe Routes for Schools". No states are planning to opt out this year. Washington has a new governor so Recreation and Conservation Office had meetings in advance to explain the program so that our state did not opt out.

RCO is also participating in the National Database of Recreational Trails Program project (hosted by American Trails Association) [www.recreationaltrails.org](http://www.recreationaltrails.org). Darrell Jennings, with RCO has been working to update the information in this database and has cleaned up the discrepancies that had listed what was applied for, instead of what was funded.

### Program Administration

Marguerite went over a few more items on the evaluator survey. One comment was that evaluators were only given 3 weeks for the evaluation and that they had 4-6 weeks for evaluation in other years. In reviewing the past 5 years, it was actually 3 weeks every year. However, it does raise the question, do evaluators have enough time. Kevin Farrell feels it is a tight timeline when working around busy work schedules. Durlyn feels you cannot do too many at once, that you have to break the reviews into chunks so it does create a tight timeline. Marguerite feels we could add one more week, she will have Lorinda Anderson expand the timeline. Ted Jackson and Kristen Kuykendall would also like to have the heads up notice come out a full month in advance so they can schedule better on their calendars. John Keates says the number of projects submitted also needs to be considered in planning timelines. There were a few comments that were specific to agencies represented, and Marguerite will share those with the agencies to give feedback.

### RCO Planning Activities

RCO is working on the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) which is required for federal Land and Water Conservation Fund funds, as part of the process they do extensive surveys and town hall meetings. They are also working on the Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Program plan and Washington State Trails plan (RCO web site, trail mapping, ORV guide). Everyone in this Recreational Trails Program group should have received a notice about the plan being out for review. Please let Lorinda Anderson know if you did not receive the notice. We need this groups input for the recommendation given to the RCO director and the board. Durlyn was concerned that if we map where the trails are currently and show the gaps that the local landowners may respond in varying ways. Marguerite says the board has also cautioned this group on the amount of detail and that they do not want to fund an interactive map, because we do not have many resources to pay for that sort of detail.

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Current mapping would be an interim map until we have funding for better detail. Marguerite spoke about an App for boating that the RCO is working on, and Nikki Fields spoke about the new State Parks App and how it works. Gerry says some trails mapping is on the National trails site now. Nikki says not all of our trails are rail trails so they would not show up on that National map. The new mapping will show more of what is in our state. Gerry is concerned with spending money on mapping rather than using that money to fund further projects. Marguerite likes to get feedback from this group before we spend money and then shares the information with final decision makers at RCO and at the Board. Ted says the map could be a grant application and be run competitively with other projects. Kristen says the Education grant rules may limit it somewhat if we run it that way. Ted asked what administrative costs for RCO are currently. The level is 5%. The money for this project is from returned funds. Once we have an idea of cost and scope of work, Marguerite will email the information to this group.

Dean says MAP 21 funds are coming through the Transportation Gas Trust Fund. He feels future funding will be okay because the bill was for 21 months and he feels we will complete it. He does not think MAP 21 will be rolled into MAP 22, there is a focus on productivity and bang for your buck, but he does think that trails funding is fairly secure because there is a focus on getting people outside.

### *Break*

Marguerite reviewed the Stakeholder Recommendations. Walking, hiking, and biking were the most common recreation on the trails surveys. The demographics are changing with more urban areas and an aging population. Marguerite also reviewed the stakeholder recommendations. We are looking at ways to keep our data gathering consistent, and looking for more sustainable revenue sources, maintaining existing trails is a priority and programs and initiatives to continue to focus on user conflict management and increase safety. This was where creating a trails inventory or website that is an information clearinghouse was requested. We are not actively pursuing other sustainable revenue sources, because we are serving the governor and legislature and cannot lobby. It appears they were looking for a tax based revenue. There is also a focus on sustainability that will be presented to the Board, which currently has a sustainability plan in place. New suggestions will further define it.

### Next Steps:

- Late September- distribute plan,
- November – review changes to draft present recommended grant process changes,
- January – Request board approval of Trails plan, and request board approval of any grant process changes.

### 2014 Grant Cycle

Some items we are reviewing are Evaluation Criteria Changes, PRISM Metrics, and NEPA. There will be more detail this year on costs and length of trail, and number of FTE's created. The current maintenance definition does not include operational costs, to align with federal guidance. We are looking for ways to

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clarify which items are maintenance to maintain trails and which items are administrative operation costs. There is also confusion about what program does what, between the Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Program and the Recreational Trails Program. We also do not have a way to measure whether we have reduced the maintenance backlog. Ted wants to know if it is even possible to catch up the backlog with the limited funds we have. Marguerite asked how to figure that out? How will we measure and classify what is part of the backlog? Ted feels it will vary with land managers and how they rate the backlog. Marguerite says that is true; and we need to ask the land managers how they do that, and how they are using their Recreational Trails Program monies. Then we can see if the money is meeting the Board's intent with its use. If the needs are different, then that needs to be reflected. If our program is about reducing backlog, are we doing that? We had a rush of applications following an ice storm a couple years ago, it was an immediate need so that it needed to be repaired for the trails to be used, it was not backlog yet, but would quickly become backlog. Sometimes our priorities change for a year, the goal is to have trails open and available for use. Kevin Farrell proposed saving a portion of funds in an emergency pot for repairing high use corridors if they sustain sudden damage from storms, mudslides, etc. Gerry says as an evaluator he is just looking at the best bang for the buck and each metric detail does not always matter as much as the overall look. He feels some of the information is subjective. Marguerite also asked, if there is enough money should be fund everything? Durlyn wants to have priority projects not just on the most loved trails but also on the connector trails. Ted Jackson thinks we should consider using some Recreational Trails Program on USFS road maintenance to get to trails. We currently do not fund roads. Roads are an eligibility issue, Recreational Trails Program is not designed to fund them. If we make metric changes it may affect environmental clearances for applicants, they may have been listing themselves in a categorical exclusion that is no longer correct and we want to have NEPA compliance.

### Other Business

Next steps, the Board will review the public comments and update the manuals accordingly. We have vacancies for five more positions on this board; please let RCO know if you want to suggest someone for a position. Leslie Connelly is now a policy specialist. Myra Barker has been promoted to compliance specialist. RCO currently has an opening for an Outdoor Grants Manager and is currently interviewing. Darrell Jennings, senior grants manager, will become the new Trails Administrator, similar to what Greg Lovelady has done in the past. Darrell currently serves on the Washington State Trails Coalition. A change to compliance is that now every two years RCO will send out a list to each sponsor notifying them of their long-term compliance responsibilities.

### 2014 Schedule

Application Webinar – January 2014

Applications Due – July 2014

Evaluations – September 2014

Annual Meeting – October/November 2014

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*Adjourn*