

JULY COMMISSION MEETING RECAP

WASHINGTON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION



The Commission spent a busy week in Stanwood and Bellingham where they met with partners and worked through packed agendas. Here's an overview of topics covered.

COMMISSION MEETING

Item E-1: Proposed 2025 Regular Meeting Schedule for the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

The Commission previously discussed its proposed 2025 regular meeting schedule at its virtual meeting on May 29, 2024. The Commission was asked to approve the proposed schedule.

This proposal was unanimously approved.

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Item E-2: Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 352-32-030 Camping Stay Limits and (WAC) 352-32-010 Definitions

Operations Division Manager Chris Holm and Operations Director Jon Crimmins asked the Commission to approve proposed changes to camping stay limits. The proposal amends the WAC to allow no more than 10 nights in one park within a 30-day period and total stays to not exceed 90 days per calendar year in all state parks.

This proposal was unanimously approved. The new camping stay limits will go into effect on Aug. 19.

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124
PARKS



120,000
ACRES



1,300 miles
OF TRAILS



45 million
ANNUAL VISITS



7
COMMISSIONERS



Tribal relations Director Jenna Bowman, Parks Director Diana Dupuis, Commission Chair Sophia Danenberg and Tribal Relations Deputy Director JJ McMinds blanketing Phreddie Lane at the Blue Heron Center at Birch Bay. Staff and leadership were honored to come together and learn from the Tribal Relations Division in a show of appreciation by “wrapping tribal representatives in thanks” through the presentation of blankets at the end of our time together.

COMMISSION MEETING

Item E-3: Sale of Excess Timber from Forest Health Treatments

Agency Forester David Cass presented the Commission with a request to delegate authority to the Parks Director for the sale of excess timber from forest health treatments. The agency is preparing for forest health treatments in Nisqually and Riverside state parks. Both projects are expected to occur this biennium and will help the agency reach its 1,000-acre per biennium treatment target for forest health and to support overall stewardship goals.

This request was unanimously approved.

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Item E-4: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Grants Program (WWRP)– State Parks Category – Project Evaluation

Parks Planner Lauren Bromley provided the Commission with a brief background on the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, which contributes directly to the Commission’s strategic goals surrounding customer experience; resource management; and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) considers grant applications for funding through the WWRP in 12 categories. Bromley provided the Commission with staff recommendations for a revised ranking of priority projects to be supported by anticipated WWRP funding, and she requested authorization for staff to submit the approved ranked project list to RCO.

This request was unanimously approved.

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Item E-5: Agency Request Legislation for the 2025 Session

Policy and Governmental Affairs Director Owen Rowe provided an annual review and opened discussion about requested legislation for the 2025 Legislative Session. Rowe noted this session will have a new governor, a new attorney general, a new commissioner of public lands and other major changes. Rowe also noted any requests Parks brings forward will likely be more challenging to get approved because inflation is stripping many of the state’s resources. Rowe requested the Commission approve the staff recommendation to reintroduce legislation that didn’t pass last session and delegate authority to the Parks Director and committees to finalize these submittals.

This request was unanimously approved.

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COMMISSION MEETING

Item E-6: Capital Budget

After a robust conversation during the previous day's work session, Parks Development Deputy Director Andrew Rose and Capital Program Manager Kyle Murphy presented the Commission with a request to approve staff-recommended 2025-27 capital projects, priority order and funding level, as well as a request to authorize the Parks Director to make minor alterations if needed and submit the budget proposal to the Office of Financial Management (OFM).

This request was unanimously approved with an amendment submitted by Commissioner Scott Merriman.

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Item E-7: 2025 Supplemental Operating Budget Request

Budget Director Van Church presented the Commission with a request to approve the 2025 supplemental operating budget request of approximately \$2.8 million, of which \$60,000 is from earned Parks Renewal and Stewardship Account (PRSA) revenue and \$2,740,000 is from the general fund. The requested action also included authorization for the Parks Director to make changes in dollar amounts and/or items in the proposal request as needed for submittal to OFM.

This request was unanimously approved.

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Item E-8: 2025-27 Biennial Operating Budget Request

Budget Director Van Church stayed on to present the 2025-27 biennial operating budget request of approximately \$281.7 million and ask for authorization of the Parks Director to submit the budget request to OFM. The requested action also included authorization for the Parks Director to make wording changes, technical corrections and changes to dollar amounts in the submittal as needed to finalize it.

This request was unanimously approved.

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Commissioner Sophia Danenberg and Parks Director Diana Dupuis blanketing Candice Wilson at the Northwest Indian College Campus. Phredde Lane is on the right with Commissioner Holly Williams and Tribal Relations Director Jenna Bowman is on the far left.

COMMISSION MEETING

Item E-9: Commission Policies

Policy and Governmental Affairs Director Owen Rowe addressed the Commission again to request to consolidate two Commission policies related to commercial advertising in state parks by repealing Commission Policy 45-14-1: “Advertising in State Parks: Digital Media and Printed Collateral” and by incorporating direction in that document in Commission Policy 45-161: “Commercial Advertising in Washington State Parks.” Next, Rowe requested the repeal of Commission Policy-10-07-1: “Working Capital Reserve Fund.” This policy was developed in 2007 and is no longer relevant to how the Parks Renewal and Stewardship Account is currently managed. Finally, Rowe recommended amendments to Commission Policy 25-12-09: “Commission Travel” to align with current agency practices and Commission structure.

This request was unanimously approved.

Item E-10: Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail – Ellensburg – Easement for Public Road and Utility Crossings

Did you know Parks manages a 287-mile trail that extends all the way to the Idaho border? The Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail is a gem in the state that gives visitors the opportunity to pass through a variety of the ecosystems contained within the state. Property and Acquisitions Specialist Tammy Ferguson presented a report on the progress made with MLC Laird Holdings II LLC for a public road crossing and utility crossing on the trail for the Foster Development, located on the west side of Ellensburg.

Action on this item will be requested at the Commission’s virtual meeting in August.

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Washington State Parks Foundation Executive Director John Floberg presents to the Commission.



The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission was honored to be welcomed to the traditional lands of the Lhaq'amish, the People of the Sea, during its visit to the area. Lummi Nation Chair Anthony Hilliare stopped in to greet the Commission and Parks leadership.

Commission Chair Sophia Danenberg, Commissioner Mike Latimer, Agency Director Diana Dupuis and Agency Deputy Director Mike Sternback were invited to join the Kingfisher of Orcas canoe family as they practiced near Lummi Island. Commissioners and leadership were given a tour of Lummi Nation, visiting Tribal Council Chambers, Northwest Indian College, newly opened Tribal Health Center and the Lummi Bay hatchery.

State Parks' Tribal Relations Division leads diplomacy efforts for the agency and is proud of our team for practicing Tribal cultural humility.

PRE-ARRANGED GUEST SPEAKERS

John Floberg, Executive Director, Washington State Parks Foundation

The Washington State Parks Foundation has a strong partnership with Washington State Parks. Executive Director John Floberg said he's excited about the continued relationship, and he reported on several successes over the past year. One way the Foundation supports Parks is through Park Improvement Projects (PIPs). This year, the Foundation received 24 PIP proposals and was able to fund all of them. The next time you're in a park, keep an eye out for signs that highlight completed PIP projects.

This year, the Foundation also supported first-time park users by providing youth camping gear at Birch Bay and Larrabee state parks, providing more funding for the Everyone Outdoors Program, working with organizations to provide transportation to parks for kids and developing a partnership with Fridie Outdoors to develop video tutorials for new park users. Additionally, the Foundation is supporting programs to enable more people with disabilities to enjoy parks through partnerships with programs like Disabled Hikers. Finally, Floberg discussed a few of the staff development and stewardship projects the Foundation has invested in to promote a well-rounded parks system.

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Yvonne Kraus, Executive Director, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance (EMBA)

After almost a decade of leadership, EMBA Executive Director Yvonne Kraus announced her departure from the organization and welcomed its new executive director Eddie Espinosa. EMBA is the largest statewide mountain biking nonprofit in the country, supporting more than 8,500 members. Kraus thanked Parks for its ongoing planning efforts at both Mount Spokane and Riverside state parks. She also highlighted continued sold out enrollment for EMBA's youth camps at Squilchuck State Park.

Kraus also addressed the Commission and raised some concerns she hopes can be addressed as EMBA transitions its leadership and continues its partnership with Parks. In particular, she focused on the organization's desire to strengthen this relationship through a maintenance agreement and highlighted the value of investing in partnerships with trail organizations.

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Jim van Loben Sels, Executive Director, MS2000

As van Loben Sels said, "No snow makes for an interesting ski season!" Despite the lack of snow, Mt. Spokane (MS) 2000 still had a break-even year and is excited for the upcoming season. It's anticipated to bring a lot more snow. Additionally, the 2024-25 season will premiere a new half-hitch handle tow, a feature the public has been requesting for nearly a decade. Van Loben Sels says his next priority is funding a \$4.1M Vista Cruiser lift replacement. He said it is difficult to get funding for projects over \$1M, but estimates an added \$100,000 to the concession's rent if the Vista Cruiser lift is replaced.

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WORK SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Youth Leadership Program Update

Though he recently retired, former Northwest Assistant Regional Manager John Keates presented to the Commission with two members of the Youth Leadership Program about the activities and impact of that program. The youth presenters also provided proposals for ways they feel Parks can continue to grow its engagement with kids and teens. Proposals included outdoor rock climbing walls, ziplining, new trails, archery and outdoor laser tag courses.

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Parks Employee Behavior Based Policies and Training

Human Resources Director Amber Erdahl presented at the request of the Commission ad-hoc committee. She shared information related to policies and training required for all Washington State employees and asked the Commissioners to consider adding them to their recommended onboarding and training plans. The policies included Anti-Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Harassment, Violence in the Workplace, Respectful Work Environment and Employee Conduct and Ethics. Required trainings included Sexual harassment Prevention, Ethics in State Government and IT Security.

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Forest Health and Arboriculture Annual Update

Did you know that state park forests provide habitat for rare plants and animals, and most of the state's remaining low-land old growth forests are found in state parks? Parks is proud to be the steward of lands that contain diverse forests, each with different needs. Agency Forester David Cass provided the Commission with an annual update about the forest system within our parks and shared about the agency's arboriculture program.

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Touring Commissioners and the Parks Executive Leadership Team visit Lummi's aquamarine facilities with Esteemed Elder Wolfman.

WORK SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Capital Budget Update

Ahead of their requested action at the regular Commission meeting, Parks Development Deputy Director Andrew Rose and Capital Program Manager Kyle Murphy provided the Commission with an update on 2025-27 capital budget development and previewed the proposed 2025-27 capital budget submittal. The submittal was developed through thorough consultation, including more than 30 meetings with between staff and capital program staff.

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2023-25 Financial Update

Administrative Services Director Laura Holmes provided the Commission with a report on the 2023-25 biennium operating and capital budget expenditures and Parks Renewal and Stewardship Account (PRSA) revenue. Holmes also noted Parks has had 36.4 million recreation visits this year to date.

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Several attended the Commission meeting to show support for the Statewide Skilled Labor and Trades (SLAT) Campaign endorsed by the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE). From the left: Adam Airoldi (WFSE Natural Resources Policy Committee Chair and Parks Arbor Crew Supervisor), Morgan Corpuz-McKee (WFSE Council Representative), Alicia Burki (1466 delegate to the SLAT Committee), John Janssen (1466 Trades Subcommittee co-chair and Parks Construction and Maintenance supervisor), Sean Dannen (Union WFSE staffer assigned to the SLAT Committee) and Grace Dannen (Sean's child, attending in solidarity)

July 15 SPECIAL MEETING

In accordance with (RCW 42.30.080), RCW 79A.90.025(1), the Chair of this Commission called a Special Meeting for July 15 to hear staff report and public comments on overnight accommodations at Cama Beach State Park. No final action was taken during the special meeting.

During the meeting, Parks Planning Program Manager Michael Hankinson discussed some of the history of Cama Beach, its significance to the local community and the challenges it is facing. He also acknowledged that there are many different voices compounded by the many issues that must be considered in any future management decisions. Some issues and considerations include sustainable design of the site and impacts of climate change in the park – including a failing seawall and heavy flooding that has damaged the sewer and electrical systems. There are also known cultural and historical complexities at the site.

Hankinson presented the preliminary staff recommendation to not reopen the cabins where they currently sit and to, instead, plan for a sustainable park that is in harmony with the dynamic site conditions.

The Commission then heard public comments from 26 individuals about the proposed changes to Cama Beach State Park.

The Commission will vote on the item at its regularly scheduled commission meeting on Thurs., Oct. 10.



[View the special meeting here.](#)



Learn more about the [Cama Beach Project here.](#)



“Words of Wisdom” share with Commissioners, Parks Executive Leadership Team and other Parks staff at end of the tour by Esteemed Elder Wolfman.

MAY VIRTUAL COMMISSION MEETING

On May 29, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission held its regularly scheduled commission meeting virtually. View the [meeting video here](#). Read the [meeting minutes here](#).

Requested action

Item E-1: Bridle Trails State Park Land Classification Update

This item asked the Commission to approve an update to the land classifications at Bridle Trails State Park. The motion passed unanimously.

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Work session

2025 SUPPLEMENTAL AND 2025-27 OPERATING BUDGET

Administrative Services Director Laura Holmes and Budget Director Van Church presented the Commission with an update on the plan for the 2025 supplemental and the 2025-27 operating budget requests.

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FINANCIAL UPDATE

Administrative Services Director Laura Holmes addressed the Commission again to provide it with an update on the status of State Parks' 2023-25 operating and capital budget expenditures, and the revenue collected to the Parks Renewal and Stewardship Account.

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2025 COMMISSION DATES AND LOCATIONS

Executive Assistant Becki Ellison asked the Commission to discuss meeting logistics for 2025, including possible dates, locations and tours. The Commission voted to approve the determined 2025 regular meeting schedule at its regular meeting on July 18.

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FORT WORDEN UPDATE

Parks Deputy Director Mike Sternback briefed the Commission on the draft long-range plan for Fort Worden, which was developed by Pros Consulting. Brian Trusty from Pros Consulting and Celeste Tell from the Fort Worden PDA joined him to present.

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MEET OUR COMMISSIONERS & DIRECTOR



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SCOTT
MERRIMAN
COMMISSIONER



ALI
RAAD
COMMISSIONER



DIANA
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SERVICE PINS

Kyle Murphy: 25 years of service

Capital Program Manager Kyle Murphy represents what it means to be a public servant. Over his extensive career with the state, Murphy has lent his expertise to the WA departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Washington State Parks. His career is marked by his dedication to public lands stewardship and his unwavering leadership through complex situations. We're grateful to have him on the team!

Patti Anderson: 40 years of service

The care Park Ranger Patti Anderson takes in her work is contagious. She's never one to take shortcuts and is known for her attention to detail – especially when it comes to painting! Anderson is known for her kindness with guests and her helpful nature. When presenting her with her service pin, Operations Director Jon Crimmins said, "Everyone around you learns from you." Thank you, Patti!



Parks Development Deputy Director Andy Rose and Kyle Murphy

Ranger Patti Anderson and Operations Director Jon Crimmins

STEWARDSHIP HERO AWARD

Wild Sky Community Trail Association

On behalf of the Wild Sky Community Trail Association, Niel McWee accepted the Stewardship Hero Award for the group's outstanding work in the Forks of the Sky area. They have helped in many crucial projects, including the removal and recycling of more than 150 tires that were dumped in the park, as well as invasive and noxious weed removal. Thank you for all you do!



Commission Chair Sophia Danenberg, Niel McWee and Park Ranger Kevin Lease