

JANUARY COMMISSION MEETING RECAP

WASHINGTON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION



The Commission met in Lacey this month to hold its regular meeting at the future State Parks headquarters. On Jan. 28, Commissioners also spent a day on Capitol Hill to meet with 23 legislators and discuss State Parks' priorities.

COMMISSION MEETING

Item E-1: 2025 Director's Performance Agreement and 2024 Performance Evaluation

The Commission was asked to adopt the 2025 Director's Performance Agreement, which includes 2025 Commission Priorities. They were also asked to document their conclusion that the Director performed satisfactorily in 2024. The Commission met with the Director during the Jan. 29 work session and shared that they believe she is doing a great job and look forward to her continued leadership of the agency.

The Commission unanimously voted to adopt the 2025 Director's Performance Agreement and Jan. - July 2025 Commission Priorities.

Item E-2: Financial update

Administrative Services Director Laura Holmes provided a report on State Parks' 2023-25 biennium operating and capital budget expenditures, Parks Renewal and Stewardship Account (PRSA) revenue and the Governor's recently proposed Operating and Capital budgets. Holmes reported our capital budget expenditures are mostly on track but may come in slightly under projected reappropriations. General Fund spending is also on track or slightly under. Due to the state's budget shortfall, State Parks has been financially cautious and, as such, its PRSA spending is slightly under.

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124
PARKS



120,000
ACRES



1,300 miles
OF TRAILS



41+ million
ANNUAL VISITS



7
COMMISSIONERS



This spring, State Parks' headquarters is moving to Lacey to share space with the Department of Ecology in their headquarters on Desmond Drive SE.

Item E-3: Legislative update

The Commission welcomed State Parks' new Policy and Governmental Affairs Director Brian Considine. Considine comes from the Department of Natural Resources and has approximately 17 years of experience in state government. In his first presentation to the Commission, Considine provided an update on agency request legislation: HB 1024: Leasing authority of State Parks at St. Edward State Park and SB 5234: Snowmobile registration fees. So far, he says the legislation is doing well. Learn more about the agency's [legislative priorities here](#).

Item E-4: Boating Program update

Boating Program Manager Rob Sendak updated the Commission on the activities of the Washington State Boating Program, which includes the federally funded Recreational Boating Safety and the Clean Vessel Act Grant programs. In 2024, staff offered Paddle Safe curriculum to more than 750 kids. The program provides youth with a free life jacket and teaches the basics of water safety through interactive, on-the-water lessons. Their marine enforcement staff approved \$1.4m in Vessel Registration Fees and reported 14,451 vessel safety inspections in 2024. Sendak also provided a closer look at reportable incident and fatality data, sharing his hope to continue education to further lessen the number of fatalities on the water and improve our metric gathering for more accurate reporting.

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Item E-5: Winter Recreation Program update

Winter Recreation Program Manager Corey Tolar provided the Commission with an update on the Winter Recreation Program's 2024 non-motorized and snowmobile programs' accomplishments and challenges. The Winter Recreation Program manages Sno-parks around the state for non-motorized winter recreation use such as Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, dog sledding and backcountry skiing. The program also provides services such as snow removal, trail grooming, sanitation, education and enforcement. A subsection of the program, the Snowmobile Program, is facing financial difficulties. This season, it had a 25% reduction in available funds due, in part, to a decline in snowmobile registrations.

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WORK SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Miller Peninsula planning update

Parks Planner Lauren Bromley presented the Commission with an update on the process to develop a Classification and Management Plan (CAMP) and a Master Plan for Miller Peninsula State Park Property, along with an associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

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Lake Sammamish planning update

Parks Planner Michael Hankinson provided an overview of the planning efforts at Lake Sammamish State Park, which will result in an update to the park's Management Plan. Lake Sammamish provides valuable habitat for kokanee salmon and receives significant love and support from community groups. As such, 62 acres of land have been restored along Issaquah Creek.

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Discount Pass Program update

This presentation gave the Commission a quick update on the Discount Pass Program and offered a few considerations for improvements. Program Specialist Ariel Ryon provided a scoping presentation about the benefits and challenges to creating a Limited Income Pass to reduce potential barriers to access for more visitors.

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Centennial Accord and Tribal Relations overview and update

This presentation provided an overview to the Commission on our existing 2018 Centennial Accord Plan. This plan needs to be updated annually and submitted to the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs. Tribal Relations Deputy Director JJ McMinds provided educational information about the Centennial Plan, the 1999 Millennium Agreement and our efforts to continue our Tribal Relations work.

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SERVICE PINS

MEET OUR COMMISSIONERS & DIRECTOR



**LAURIE
CONNELLY**
CHAIR



**HOLLY
WILLIAMS**
VICE CHAIR



**ALI
RAAD**
SECRETARY



**ALFIE
ALVARADO-RAMOS**
COMMISSIONER



**SOPHIA
DANENBERG**
COMMISSIONER



**MIKE
LATIMER**
COMMISSIONER



**SCOTT
MERRIMAN**
COMMISSIONER



**DIANA
DUPUIS**
DIRECTOR

Chris Kennedy, 25 years

Chris is State Parks' IT Architecture Senior Specialist. In his 25 years, he has supported our business needs and security. Chris is described as a leader in bringing stability, efficiency and innovation to the function of the agency. Chris, you are a deeply appreciated member of the team. Thank you for your years of service!

GOLD STARS

Brian Martin

You provide excellent customer service and always show kindness to campers. Thank you for your hard work and for leading with compassion.

Johanna Painter

Thank you for always being so helpful, knowledgeable and willing to find out the answers. You are responsive, organized and always follow up. Special thank you for all your hard work planning the AA2 NW meeting!

Ken Graham

Thank you for stepping in to support impacted tenants at Fort Worden State Park. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. Thank you for all you do!



Commissioner Sophia Danenberg (left) passes the gavel to the new Commission Chair, Laurie Connelly (right). State Parks Director Diana Dupuis (center) smiles with them.



Chris Kennedy receives recognition for his 25 years of service with State Parks.

NOVEMBER 2024 VIRTUAL WORK SESSION AND MEETING

On Nov. 13, 2024, the Commission met virtually for its regular meeting and work session.

COMMISSION MEETING

Item E-1: Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail – Bullfrog Property Transfer to WSDOT

The Commission was asked to authorize the transfer of 0.68 acres along the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail to the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). This request was unanimously approved.

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WORK SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Mount Spokane planning update

Parks Planners Melinda Wolfman and Paul Knowles discussed their ongoing work to update the Classification and Management Plan (CAMP), Master Plan and Trails Plan for Mount Spokane State Park. This is a collaborative planning effort between the Planning and Trails programs.

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Blake Island planning update

Parks Planner Alex Sullivan greeted the Commission with an update on ongoing planning efforts at Blake Island State Park. Sullivan is leading work to develop a new Master Plan for the park. The planning approach for the park has been updated from previous efforts. Initially, the approach was to find a way to replace the concessionaire that previously hosted excursions around the island. Now, the agency is focused on gaining more awareness of deficiencies in the existing buildings, understanding more about what is appropriate for the site and undergoing a master planning process.

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Occupancy data update

Communications Manager Sarah Fronk, Visitor Services Manager Keri Murphy and Central Reservations System Manager Mark Baker updated the Commission on the latest camping data and demographics. The team also shared information about research into vacant but reserved campsites and work the Visitor Services and Communications teams are doing to fill empty sites.

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Financial update

Now that we are 63% of the way through the biennial cycle, Administrative Services Director Laura Holmes provided the Commission with an update on 2023-25 biennium operating and capital budget expenditures, Parks Renewal and Stewardship Account (PRSA) revenue and the Governor's recently proposed Operating and Capital budgets. Of note: the actual revenue collected by the agency is up 5% from 2023.

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Westport Golf proposal update

Deputy Director Mike Sternback updated the Commission on the latest status of the Westport Golf project. Sternback provided a brief history of the project to date and then an update on where we are now. Currently, State Parks is in the process of reviewing the preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). You can learn more about [what's happening here](#).

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DECEMBER 2024 PLANNING MEETING

The Commission met at State Parks Headquarters in Tumwater for its end-of-the-year planning meeting.

On Dec. 10, they were joined by members of the agency's Executive Leadership Team, who presented 2024 highlights and accomplishments from their divisions.

Then, the Commission worked through budget planning and prioritization. This included a review of the strategic plan, discussion of the state of the budget and impacts from emerging issues and the budget planning process.

On Dec. 11, the Commission entered into a closed Executive Session where they discussed the agency Director's Performance Review and ongoing litigation.