

# Community Support for Washington State Parks

## 2015-2017 Budget Request

**\$159 million operating**

**\$96 million capital**

### Parks for Washingtonians

The Washington state park system is one of the largest, most diverse and most popular state park systems in the country. State parks are located in 34 of the state's 39 counties and in every eco-region, providing opportunities for visitors to fully explore Washington's diverse and dramatic landscapes. Funding State Parks will support Washington's growing outdoor recreation industry and preserve the iconic places that 33 million residents and tourists visits each year.

### Parks in Need of Support

The State Legislature created the Discover Pass in 2011 to offset steep reductions in general tax support for Parks, but the Pass has only generated about half the revenue projected. Parks has responded, and the legislature has given it new tools, to increase revenues from \$39M to \$95M, but has not been able to offset the 91% loss in general fund support since the 2007-2009 biennium, resulting in a significant shrinking of overall financial resources. This reduction has led to severe cuts in services to the public, extensive employee layoffs, and a growing maintenance backlog that threatens the natural, cultural, and historic resources preserved by the State Parks system. This funding structure is inadequate to maintain the quality of parks that citizens expect.

### Operating Budget Request

To put State Parks on a path to restore the system to health, the Parks Commission and Governors Blue Ribbon Task Force have determined State Parks needs an operating budget of \$159 million per biennium. State Parks can generate almost \$95 million of that budget in earned income, but will need \$64 million in tax support. Fortunately, \$10 million from the Litter Tax is slated for Parks for the next biennium, so the additional tax support need is *only \$54 million*.

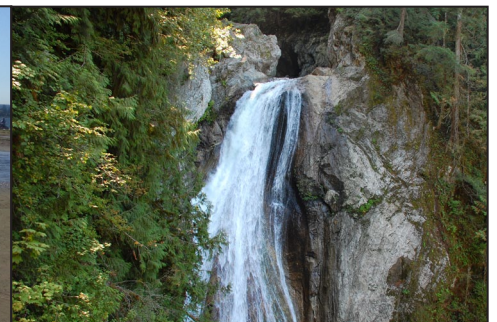
Washington State Parks		Operating Request: \$159,000,000
Earned income	Discover Pass, camping fees, etc.	\$95,000,000
Existing tax support	Litter tax	\$10,000,000
<b>Additional tax support required</b>	<b>The funding gap</b>	<b>\$54,000,000</b>
Total operating budget	Earned income and tax support	\$159,000,000



Iron Horse



Lake Sammamish



Olallie

State Parks are a significant part of the \$22 billion and 200,000 jobs that Washington’s outdoor recreation industry contributes to the state’s economy. According to a recent



study commissioned by the Recreation and Conservation Office, 33 million people visit Washington State Parks every year, which is more than visitation to all federal lands in the state combined. The outdoor recreation economy supports small cities and towns in rural areas, where recreation opportunities at parks attract tourists and generate revenue for local business. Access to nearby outdoor recreation is a key factor drawing corporations and employees to the urban areas. The great outdoors are an undeniable asset and greatly improve the quality of life for Washington State residents.



The Parks Commission recently completed a comprehensive evaluation of the Parks system’s capital needs and is aligned with the Governor in a \$96 million capital budget request that will sustainably draw down the \$470 million deferred maintenance backlog. These capital projects will reduce public safety risks, protect our state’s natural and cultural heritage, encourage recreation, and generate revenue. Here are a few examples of the many important capital projects in the Mountains to Sound Greenway.



<b>Outdoor recreation capital projects in the Greenway</b>		
Iron Horse	Repair Tunnels 46 & 47 near Thorp to reopen the longest rail-trail in the nation and facilitate tourism in Kittitas County	\$3,642,000
Squak Mountain	Expand equestrian and hiking use on Squak Mountain near Issaquah by installing necessary bridges on several trails	\$258,000
Lake Sammamish	Provide matching dollars for Recreation and Conservation Office grant to build two docks and improve ADA facilities at the only public boat access on the entire lake	\$1,100,000
Lake Sammamish	Design, and permit several elements of that 2007 Master Plan for facility improvements and environmental restoration	\$513,000



For more information:

Daniel Farber, Policy and Governmental Affairs Director, State Parks | 360.902.8504 | Daniel.Farber@parks.wa.gov

Doug Schindler, Deputy Director, Greenway Trust | 206.618.6265 | Doug.Schindler@mtsgreenway.org

MOUNTAINS TO SOUND GREENWAY | 911 WESTERN AVENUE, SUITE 203, SEATTLE, WA 98104 | mtsgreenway.org