



When legislators return to Olympia in January, their biggest challenge will be to address the projected multi-billion dollar shortfall for the 2009-2011 budget cycle.

This special issue of the *DNR Recreation News* will give you some insight into how the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Recreation Program is funded and our process for putting together the budget for the upcoming two-year period (biennium).

Thank you for sending us your questions about our budget. For more information, you can view DNR's entire proposed budget for the 2009-2011 biennium at: www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/Budget/Pages/bdgt_data_repts_pub_and_info.aspx

Your budget-related questions:

- How is the Recreation Program funded?
- I'm confused about fuel taxes and the ORV license tab fees. Can you please set me straight on what pays for what?
- What is the Recreation Program's proposed budget for the 2009-2011 biennium?
- Why isn't recreation included in the 2009-2011 budget section that lists DNR's vision and strategic plans?
- What is DNR's plan for funding trail maintenance?
- Why doesn't DNR charge fees to users of recreation lands?
- Why are there no funds or, at best, inadequate funds for enforcement on DNR-managed land?
- Does DNR prioritize funding multi-use projects that benefit as many public users as possible?

Q. How is the Recreation Program funded?

A. Our budget comes from a variety of sources, some of which are more stable than others. The largest source of funding for recreation comes from the [Nonhighway Off-road Vehicle Activities \(NOVA\) Account](#). However, 30 percent (\$1.5 million) of our program's total budget comes from competitive grants.

Funding sources for 2008:

2008 Funding from Relatively Stable Sources	Amount	What does it pay for?
NOVA Account (Fuel Tax)	\$1.4 million	Maintenance for 112 recreational facilities (campgrounds and trailheads) and more than 900 miles of trails. Note: Although this source of funding is guaranteed each year, the amount varies due to fluctuations in gas consumption and, therefore, taxes paid.
Washington State General Fund	\$500,000	Supports 31 recreational facilities (campgrounds and trailheads) and more than 100 miles of trails. Note: This amount has fluctuated anywhere from \$0 to \$510,000/year for the past 20 years.
Management Funds (Revenue generated from managing trust lands)	\$51,000	Used as match for NOVA Education and Enforcement grants and support for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Disabled Hunter Road Access Entry Program.

2008 Funding from Variable Sources	Amount	What does it pay for?
Grants <i>(From the Recreation and Conservation Office. Part of this amount comes from matching funds from volunteers and other funding sources.)</i>	\$1.5 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance and operation of DNR's 143 recreation sites and 900 miles of trails. Education and enforcement in designated recreation facilities and trails. Renovation and deferred maintenance projects on the 143 recreation sites and 900 miles of trails.
Volunteers <i>(Dollar amount is determined by multiplying volunteer hours by \$13/hour.)</i>	\$700,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trail and site maintenance. Development and renovation projects. <p><i>Note: Does not include volunteers' own mileage and materials they've donated.</i></p>
Donations	\$11,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gravel, picnic tables, sign boards, planking, fencing, etc.

Special One-time Funding Sources for the 2007-2009 Biennium	Amount	What does it pay for?
NOVA appropriation	\$900,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning for Reiter Foothills and Ahtanum State Forests. Planning and designing consistent signage for off-road vehicles.
Management funds investment	\$253,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing the Public Access and Recreation policy in the <i>Policy for Sustainable Forests</i>.

These funding sources have restrictions on how they can be used:

- **Fuel Tax:** Can only be spent on NOVA-eligible facilities and trails. The funds are split among nonhighway road, motorized, and nonmotorized trails and facilities.
- **General Fund:** Offers the most flexibility to fund a variety of recreation needs.
- **Trust Management Funds:** The Resource Management Cost Account (RMCA) and the Forest Development Account (FDA) are used as match for Education and Enforcement grants and for the Disabled Hunter Road Access Entry Program. These limited purposes are basic land management costs. The RMCA and FDA funds cannot be legally used to support recreational activities.
- **Donations:** Donors normally place restrictions on how the money can be spent.

Q. I'm confused about fuel taxes and the ORV tab fees. Can you please set me straight on what pays for what?

A. This is probably one of the biggest areas of misunderstanding we hear about when it comes to the Recreation Program's budget. Some of the revenue comes directly to DNR; some we get by competing for grants. How the money is portioned out can be confusing.

Fuel taxes:

- 1% of 22 cents per gallon of taxes from fuel sales in Washington state goes to the NOVA account and is disbursed as follows:
 - 36%—Department of Natural Resources (Pays for operating and maintaining facilities and maintaining designated trails that are accessed by "nonhighway roads.")
 - 2%—Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
 - 3.5%—Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
 - 58.5%—Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) (RCO uses their portion of the gas tax revenue to offer competitive grants for ORV, nonmotorized, and nonhighway road recreation. DNR competes for this

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funding along with other local, state, and federal agencies; tribal governments; and non-profit organizations.)

ORV tab fees:

- 18%—Department of Licensing
- 82%—Recreation and Conservation Office (for competitive ORV-related grants. DNR competes for this funding along with other local, state, and federal agencies; tribal governments; and non-profit organizations.)

For more information on the NOVA Program, visit www.rco.wa.gov/rcfb/grants/nova.htm.

MYTH: Revenue from ORV tab fees goes directly to DNR's Recreation Program.

FACT: ORV tab fees go to Washington State's Recreation and Conservation Office (82%) and the Department of Licensing (18%). RCO uses some of its tab fee revenue to provide competitive grants.

Q. What is the Recreation Program's proposed budget for the 2009-2011 biennium?

A. The following is a general breakdown of our proposed budget. More details are available at: www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/Budget/Pages/bdgt_data_repts_pub_and_info.aspx

Specifically, check out the following links:

- **Sustainable Public Access:** DNR's proposed recreation enhancement package addressing support for volunteers, non-point sources of pollution caused by recreational activities, and implementation of the Reiter and Ahtanum plans.
- **Recreation Capital Renovations:** A list of the proposed recreation projects.

Operating Funds and Enhancement Request:

We have requested \$4.1 million (current level) for the next two years to support the management of the Recreation Program. In addition, we will be asking legislators for an extra \$1.2 million to:

- Carry out the recreation plans developed in 2008 and 2009 for Ahtanum and Reiter Foothills State Forests.
- Establish youth crews through the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) to address non-point pollution sources in streams and wetlands and to repair problem areas on existing trail systems.
- Support volunteers by reimbursing them for a portion of their mileage and providing them with training on maintenance and construction standards.
- Contract with law enforcement officers as needed from outside DNR to support staff in addressing chronic abuse of recreation sites.

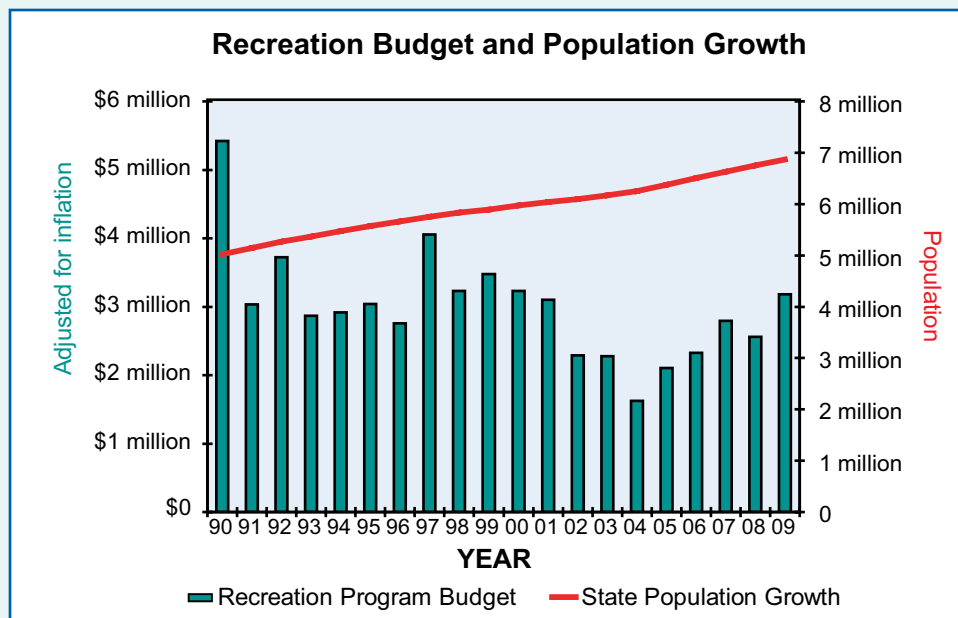
Keep in mind that neither enhancement requests nor current operating levels of the budget are guaranteed. Given the revenue shortfalls of unprecedented magnitude that Washington is facing, we will most likely be in a downsizing, not upsizing, mode.

Capital Funds:

We are requesting \$1.5 million for upgrades to some of our recreation areas, such as for new outhouses, campground improvements, and bridge replacements.

Want to Know More About the State Budget Process?

The Washington State Office of Financial Management has an easy-to-read online brochure about the budget process. Download "Washington State Budget Process": www.ofm.wa.gov/reports/budgetprocess.pdf (178KB | PDF)



Did You Know?

DNR's recreation budget has not kept pace with Washington's growing population nor the growing number of recreation users on DNR-managed lands. In 1990, our budget was \$1 per citizen. Today, our budget is 42 cents per citizen (adjusted for inflation).

Q. It seems odd that in the budget section that lists out DNR's vision and strategic plans (www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/div_obe_bdgt_0911_stratplan_rev826.pdf), recreation is not listed as one of those plans. I wonder why not?

A. DNR does not have a specific strategic plan for the Recreation Program...yet. The newly formed [Sustainable Recreation Work Group](#) is developing a vision for recreation on DNR-managed lands. The work group will also be making policy recommendations to the State Legislature by December 2009. We expect that the group will recommend that DNR develop a strategic plan for recreation. For now, our guidance comes from the Multiple Use Act, the *Policy for Sustainable Forests*, and individual recreation plans for select state forest lands such as Capitol Forest, Tahuya ORV access, and Little Pend Oreille.

Q. I'm pleased to see that the 2009-2011 budget provides for staff to oversee facilities, trail work, and enforcement. However, I don't see enough detail to explain how existing trails will be maintained. Will DNR continue to fund prison labor to clear trails, etc.? Also, how will the current plan reduce overcrowding of existing trails? I understand DNR will not authorize the creation of new trails and similar facilities, nor will it authorize trails to be restored which were converted to logging roads in recent years. Is the objective of sustainable use then to reduce the numbers of users?

A. The Recreation Program currently depends on a combination of NOVA funding, other grant funding and state general fund dollars for trail maintenance. More than 75 percent of our funding goes directly to maintenance for campgrounds and trails.

The budget package you reviewed is an **added enhancement** request to our budget proposal for the 2009-2011 budget cycle. We are stretched as far as we can go simply **maintaining** the same level of service that we have today. **Expanding or building** new trails and facilities is beyond the scope of our existing budget. The enhancements we requested will allow DNR to provide some facilities and improvements in a couple of state forests.

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And yes, we do use prison labor for a variety of tasks, including maintenance, construction, tree planting, and fire fighting. But this labor doesn't come free, nor is it always available to us.

The Recreation Program also relies on the young adult volunteers from the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) Program to provide a critical labor force to our staff. WCC members are often the first face the public sees when they come to our recreation sites. WCC crew members help maintain and build facilities, install signs, clean outhouses, pick up litter, and assist with events.

In addition, we rely heavily on the hard work and dedication of volunteers—either as individuals or organized through user groups. Without these generous people, many of our sites and trails would not remain open.

For more information on DNR's proposed budget for the 2009-2011 biennium, visit:

www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/Budget/Pages/bdgt_data_repts_pub_and_info.aspx



Photo courtesy of Friends of Capitol Forest

Volunteers from the Friends of Capitol Forest work on a trail maintenance project. Sign says: "Will work for trails."

Q. Why doesn't DNR charge fees to users of recreation lands?

A. DNR has a long history of providing free access to the lands it manages. That policy is based on a philosophy that mirrors our state culture as an outdoor state with access to our forestlands available to all—not just those who can pay. And it is based on the recreational immunity statute, which provides significant liability protection for free use. Charging fees would mean we would lose our immunity from liability. The [Sustainable Recreation Work Group](#) may explore this issue in the coming months.

Q. Why are there no funds or, at best, inadequate funds for enforcement on DNR-managed land? In our area, there are countless people who trespass and litter on DNR property. When we report such events, nothing is done. This is clearly not a DNR priority—why?

A. DNR is very concerned about public safety; however, we only have funding for seven law enforcement officers (including DNR's chief law enforcement officer) to patrol the 5.6 million acres of state and federal trust lands, aquatic lands, and natural areas that DNR manages. We also fund 25 recreation staff who are responsible for managing 1,000 miles of trails and 143 recreational facilities on more than 2.2 million acres of forest lands. Often, we can only deal with issues when they become a major problem. We know this is not the best way to operate.

So what are we doing to turn this around? Unfortunately, additional funding for law enforcement and recreational staffing isn't likely to happen over the next few years. We are taking the following steps to help improve safety and enforcement:

- With the help of DNR's law enforcement staff, recreation staff will work with user groups to be our eyes and ears to help let us know where the problems occur.
- Providing better signage in key areas—or "hot spots"—to let the public know what is proper behavior in our recreation areas.

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- Finalizing the revised changes and updates to DNR's recreation rules for clearer enforcement authority.
- Coordinating with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and local law enforcement entities to address unlawful behavior in areas with especially chronic unlawful situations.

To keep the recreation program running, we do our best to get grant funding. However, these funds are competitive, two-year grants, and although we have been successful in many of our grant applications, we have no guarantee that we'll be funded.

Q. In lean economic times, does DNR prioritize the funding of multi-use projects that benefit as many public users as possible?

A. For the past two years, our **annual operating and maintenance budget** has been approximately \$1.9 million, much of which comes from the NOVA Program gas tax revenue. We do have some discretion on how we allocate these funds. Generally, we try to make sure that we spread our existing funds evenly among motorized, non-motorized, and nonhighway road recreation facilities. Our priority is to keep everything opened and maintained in lean times and in better economic times.

For the past two years, our **capital budget** has been \$500,000/year. We determine how to spend from this fund based largely on need. Health and safety are high priorities. Other priorities include replacing aging outhouses and bridges, regardless of the type of use they support.

Last year, the Recreation Program developed a 10-year capital strategy to identify the best potential sources of funding for specific projects, *i.e.*, those projects that have the best chance of getting grant funding and that are best funded through the general fund.

For the upcoming budget cycle, we identified \$4.8 million dollars of need. But given the condition of our state's economy, we submitted a request for only \$1.5 million to deal with our most immediate health and safety needs. For the next two years, we will be concentrating on replacing aging and failing outhouses and bridges.

We are Accountable

Close monitoring of the budget and working with the regions and program staff to stay within budget ensures that the money is being invested responsibly. Each funding source, capital, and grant project has a tracking mechanism. Every month, Olympia and regional staff and I review the status of our budgets. We can track a number of items including:

- How many hours each staff member charges to the Recreation Program and its many funding sources.
- What item was purchased on what day and what funding source it came from.
- How many miles staff charged a particular vehicle to the Recreation Program and which funding source they used.

Keeping close track of the budget allows us to address shortfalls or invest unspent funds in a more timely manner.

~ Mark Mauren

Assistant Division Manager for the Recreation and WCC Programs

What's ahead in future issues?

We'll let you know about our successful NOVA grants, give an update on the Sustainable Recreation Work Group's activities, and provide more detail about capital projects and upcoming opportunities for volunteers.

DNR Recreation News

The Department of Natural Resources' Recreation Program publishes the *DNR Recreation News*. We welcome your comments and feedback.

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