

THE WILLIAM D. RUCKELSHAUS CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Situation Assessment of Recreation Access Fee Systems in Washington State

Prepared for the Washington Parks and Recreation
Commission, Washington Department of Natural Resources,
and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Conducted by Molly Stenovec and Darren Nichols

WILLIAM D. RUCKELSHAUS CENTER
Hulbert Hall, Room 121
Pullman, WA 99164-6248
-and-
901 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2900
Seattle, WA 98164-2040

DISCLAIMER

The following report was prepared by the William D. Ruckelshaus Center, a joint effort of the University of Washington and Washington State University whose mission is to act as a neutral resource for collaborative problem solving in the State of Washington and the Pacific Northwest. University leadership and the Center's Advisory Board support the preparation of this and other reports produced under the Center's auspices. However, the key themes contained in this report are intended to reflect the opinions of the interviewed parties, and the findings are those of the Center's assessment team. Those themes and findings do not represent the views of the universities or Advisory Board members.

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I. Introduction

During the 2016 supplemental legislative session, the Washington Legislature provided direction and funding to the Washington Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission), in cooperation with the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), to “coordinate a process to develop options and recommendations to improve consistency, equity and simplicity in recreational access fee systems while accounting for the fiscal health and stability of public land management” in the State of Washington (see Appendix A). The three agencies have established an “Agency Core Team” to jointly and cooperatively oversee the project. The legislative proviso specifically requires the process to analyze options and make recommendations on opportunities for state and federal permit fee coordination, to enhance consistency in the way state and federal access fees apply to various user types, and to develop a statewide approach to exemptions.

The proviso directed the Commission to “contract with the William D. Ruckelshaus Center or another neutral third party” to facilitate meetings and discussions in a collaborative process that “includes other relevant agencies and appropriate stakeholders.” The William D. Ruckelshaus Center (Center) is a joint effort of Washington State University and the University of Washington that helps parties involved in complex public policy challenges in the State of Washington and the Pacific Northwest develop collaborative, durable, and effective solutions (for more information see Appendix B).

The Agency Core Team contracted with the Center to conduct a situation assessment and, if appropriate based on the outcomes of the assessment, design and facilitate a collaborative process, oversee data collection/analysis, and other potential needed steps identified through the assessment. The situation assessment is intended to identify interests, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration and information needs related to public lands access systems and management in Washington State.

The Ruckelshaus Center conducted the situation assessment between August 2016 and January 2017. The information collection and analysis and collaborative process will take place February through November 2017. A final report, which will include both the findings of the situation assessment, research findings, and the output of a collaborative process, will be delivered to the Washington State Legislature by December 1, 2017.

Outdoor recreation and access to public lands have long played important roles in the economy, culture, and lifestyle of Washington residents. Many reports, studies, and task force groups have been authored, convened, and conducted to help better understand the role and shape the future of outdoor recreation and public land access in the state. Most recently, Governor Inslee convened a Blue Ribbon Parks & Outdoor Recreation Task Force (Task Force), which released a report in September 2014 that identified five priority areas and twelve action items¹. While some of the findings and recommendations from the Task Force report resurfaced during these interviews, this

¹ Full report available at: <http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/ORTF/ORTF-Recommendations.pdf>

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assessment contributes to that body of work, and in some instances, offers opportunities and recommendations to move forward on some actions identified by the Task Forces.

This report will provide an overview of the assessment process and methodology. Key findings—including recurring themes, opportunities and challenges, and information needs—are then presented. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration, including options for collaboration and information gathering moving forward. Supplemental information is provided in the appendices.

II. The Assessment Process

From August 2016 through January 2017, the research team, comprised of Center faculty and staff, conducted 48 semi-structured interviews with 63 individuals (see Appendix C for a complete list of interviewees). The research team developed the following criteria for selecting interview participants:

- broad range of access modes (personal vehicle parked in designated lot, boat, and non-motorized means of transit);
- broad range of user types (hikers, boaters, bikers, horseback riders, skiers, hunters, anglers) who access public lands in variety of geographies and contexts (urban and rural);
- broad range of recreation user organizations and pass holders;
- pass providers in Washington and other states;
- conservation organizations;
- state and federal land management agencies;
- tribes and tribal organizations;
- organizations and/or agencies who represent individuals who are exempt from the requirements of the Discover Pass or otherwise eligible to use public lands without a fee/pass;
- agencies and departments explicitly mentioned in the proviso; and
- fit within project time and resource constraints.

The research team selected additional interview participants using chain referral sampling. In accordance with this method, each interviewee was asked to recommend individuals and/or organizations that should be included in the assessment. A portion of the interview slots were reserved for individuals identified via referral.

The assessment sought to capture a wide range of perspectives from public lands user groups, land management agencies, and other entities with an interest in public land management and recreational access fee systems. The goal is that interested parties feel that their perspective is represented by the interviewee list and in the findings of this assessment.

The research team developed a set of interview questions to guide the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D for interview questions). Each interview flowed organically and not all interviewees responded to all questions in the time allowed.

The interview process was conducted according to human subject research procedures and protocols that were reviewed by the WSU Office of Research Assessment. All interviewees were initially contacted by email and/or phone and provided the interview questions, as well as an overview of the purpose of the project and how information gathered would be used. Prior to an interview, the research team emphasized that participation is voluntary and that interview responses would not be attributed by name or organization.

The research team took handwritten notes during interviews and aggregated those notes, anonymously, into a database. Members of the research team coded and analyzed the aggregated

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interview responses and present key findings in this report. Representatives from the Agency Core Team as well as all interviewees had an opportunity to review a draft version of this report for factual errors before it was finalized.

III. Key Issues and Interests

This section is organized around the five focal points of the proviso: 1. Simplicity (which includes opportunities/challenges affiliated with a single pass for state and federal lands), 2. Equity (which includes exemptions), 3. Consistency in the recreational access fee systems, 4. Fiscal health and stability of the agencies, and 5. Interest in a collaborative process. Interviewees also identified opportunities and challenges on the horizon.

Neither the proviso nor this assessment specifically defined “recreational access fee systems” nor provided interviewees information on the passes available in Washington. Almost all interviewees talked about the Discover Pass and many also mentioned the Northwest Forest Pass. Many interviewees also mentioned state exemptions (such as passes for disabled veterans and foster parents), Sno-Park permits, the interplay between Vehicle Access Passes and Discover Passes, off-road vehicle (ORV) licenses, and boat licenses. Just a few interviewees mentioned passes and discounted passes for accessing National Parks. Many interviewees were unaware of some components of exceptions and exemptions associated with the Discover Pass, interchangeably described discounted federal passes and exempt state passes, or expressed some degree of uncertainty around knowing what pass is needed when. In order to provide some common definitions during the presentation of key issues and interests, here is an overview of some of the passes available in Washington:

- The **Discover Pass** provides motor vehicle access to WDNR, WDFW, and State Parks lands and facilities in Washington. Users who do not park on these lands or access lands by “boat or other non-motorized means (foot, horse, bicycle, etc.)” are not required to display a Discover Pass².
- The **Northwest Forest Pass** is valid at US Forest Service day-use or entrance fee sites in Oregon and Washington.
- Many hunting and fishing licenses come with **vehicle access passes** valid for WDFW lands. Hunters and fishers who want to access DNR or State Parks land still need to purchase a Discover Pass.
- **Exemptions** (free or discounted passes granted by the Legislature to disabled veterans and foster parents, to name a few) are only valid at State Parks—not all lands under the umbrella of the Discover Pass.

² <http://www.discoverpass.wa.gov/31/About-the-Pass>

- A seasonal snowmobile or non-motorized **Sno-park permit** is required November 1 – March 31 to use a designated Sno-Park, but a Discover Pass may be used outside of that timeframe at those parking lots. Seasonal special groomed stickers may also be required at certain Sno-Parks. Daily Sno-Park Permits may be used without a special groomed sticker, but some places may also require a day or annual Discover Pass.

Interview responses and reflections on all of these passes and licenses will be examined throughout the key findings sections.

A. Simplicity of the Recreational Access System

The proviso specifically called for this process to identify opportunities for “federal and state recreational permit fee coordination, including the potential for developing a system that allows a single pass to provide access to state and federal lands.” As mentioned above, this assessment inquired into the recreational access system, but did not specifically define the parameters of that system.

i. Existing access passes in Washington

Interviewee perspectives diverged in regard to whether or not users should pay an access fee. Many interviewees felt that funding for public lands should come from the general fund, because all Washingtonians benefit from public lands, whether or not they recreate on those lands, and that all Washingtonians should pay for public lands. Other interviewees suggested that at least some portion of public land funding should come from public land. Rationale for user fees varied—some suggesting that fees foster a sense of stewardship and ownership of the lands and others suggesting that user fees are a fiscal necessity for the land management agencies. This discussion of who should pay for public lands will be discussed further in the section on the fiscal health and stability of public land management.

Regardless of whether the interviewee supported user fees, almost all interviewees expressed some degree of frustration with the current pass system and knowing what pass is needed where. These frustrations fell into four categories: 1. navigating the intersection of passes, 2. revenue sharing, 3. accessing information, and 4. pass format.

- **Navigating the intersection of passes:** For many users, interviewees suggested that a Discover Pass may be sufficient and easy to access information. Most of the frustration around the Discover Pass emerged as users try to navigate the intersection of different state land parking passes (e.g. exemptions, free days, Vehicle Access Passes) and jurisdictions. Several interviewees said they place multiple passes on the dashboard in the hopes that one will be the right pass.
- **Revenue sharing:** Many interviewees reported that most Discover Pass revenue is allocated to Parks and the balance is split between DNR and WDFW. Some interviewees felt that this formula creates unequal financial risks and consequences among the agencies who are trying to implement a single management strategy. Additionally, interviewees who primarily recreate on

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DNR or WDFW lands (ORV users for example) believe that their pass dollars subsidize State Parks.

- **Accessing information:** Many interviewees expressed frustration in using websites to acquire passes and/or information about the passes in other languages, difficulty identifying the required pass before getting to the trail head, and inability to purchase pass on short notice (such as purchase and print online or pay at the trailhead).
- **Pass format:** Many interviewees expressed frustration with the format for the pass (one that hangs from a rearview mirror), citing that it can be easy to lose or leave in the other car. A few interviewees also noted that hanging passes are vulnerable in open vehicles or motorcycles.

Almost all interviewees expressed some degree of interest in a single pass. That interest, however, was quickly followed by the reservations and cautions presented in the next section. Many interviews then segued and spent significant time presenting options to increase simplicity, equity, and coordination within the current access system. Interviewee suggestions include:

- **Purchasing the pass.** Suggestions include: ability to purchase passes online and print at home, option to bundle passes (use one hang tag, with ability to add additional passes), or use a mobile app or pay station at trail head, or provide a scanner pass similar to the Good to Go pass used for tolls by the Washington Department of Transportation.
- **Pass format.** Alternate formats for parking passes included: windshield stickers, license plate stickers, or have pass linked to license plate. Many interviewees elaborated on this option and suggested that households could pay a base fee for the first vehicle and then purchase discounted stickers for additional vehicles.
- **Access to information.** One website for seamless trip planning that clearly communicates which pass is required and where/how a pass can be purchased.
- **Streamline state parking passes.** Interviewees, especially individuals who expressed caution towards creating a combined state and federal access pass or felt that a combined pass would be too complicated to implement, suggested increasing state jurisdictions included in the Discover Pass. Several interviewees extended this thought to specifically identify the inclusion of Sno-Parks.

Additional suggestions and considerations that emerged during interviews:

- Tribal and non-tribal members may be required to acquire a mushroom collecting licenses, depending on quantity harvested and whether mushrooms are for personal or commercial use. There may be an opportunity for increased education and better coordination regarding harvest methods and timing for nontribal members.
- Offer reciprocity for ORV vehicle licenses, especially recognizing neighboring states.

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- Interviewees also suggested that modifications should not make the make system more burdensome or difficult to use.

Information needs identified by interviewees include: which suggestions for simplifying access and use are both efficient and cost effective to enforce and implement?

ii. Single Pass for State and Federal Lands

Almost all interviewees said that a coordinated or single pass could eliminate uncertainty and confusion and expressed some level of support for a one-pass system – from whole-hearted endorsement to cautious interest.

The most common benefit of a one-pass system identified by interviewees is usability for public land users. Many public land users either don't care who manages the land or lack awareness of the many different natural resource management agencies. Several interviewees also suggested that a one-pass system would reduce barriers to exploring new areas. According to those individuals, navigating websites to identify what pass is needed to park where can be frustrating. Some interviewees stated that one-pass system could be less complex and easier to communicate to both native and nonnative English speakers.

Several interviewees suggested that a single pass system could support a more coordinated system of recreation access points and landscape scale land management. A one pass system could better facilitate coordination among agencies and create opportunities for long-term, landscape-scale outcomes.

However, these individuals also expressed reservations and identified challenges to creating and implementing a one-pass system. Some interviewees expressed skepticism that a single pass system, if not also accompanied with one website for seamless trip planning across jurisdictions, as an example, could actually be easier to use and access. Other interviewees cited different exemptions and different requirements for those exemptions as a challenge within the existing pass system that would not necessarily be alleviated with the creation of a single pass.

Interviewees also questioned whether a coordinated pass system would actually create efficiencies and increase money that would be available for investing in public lands. Specifically, interviewees expressed concerns around the feasibility of implementing changes to the pass system – from building an integrated website to changing signage to public education on the new pass system.

Many interviewees expressed concern that a single pass, while potentially easier to use, may decrease pass usage. Several interviewees provided some version of this caution: Public lands are so dispersed and potentially have different users. Users who primarily recreate on state lands, but might not visit National Parks, may have to pay substantially more for a coordinated annual pass, for the same public use. In this case, interviewees cautioned that a single pass might actually decrease the number of passes purchased and visits to public lands.

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Many interviewees listed interagency implementation and revenue sharing among the agencies as a significant barrier to a one-pass system. Aside from one suggestion that revenue sharing should be geographic focused and sport/industry agnostic, interviewees did not offer specific formulas that would be acceptable for sharing or allocating pass revenue. One interviewee did suggest that agencies would need to clearly communicate to the public the overhead and administrative costs and how pass revenue would be reinvested.

Several interviewees observed that natural resource management agencies have diverse missions and branding, which may be challenging to reconcile under a common pass (a sentiment that also emerged during conversations on the Discover Pass). Another interviewee cautioned about the state getting more “tied” to the federal government, citing differences in budgeting processes and political climates.

During conversations on the one pass option, interviewees identified a number of states or pass systems which could provide lessons learned. Examples include: Oregon, Idaho, Colorado – including the Epic Pass (which primarily serves Vail Ski Resorts), and Montana’s conservation license. Another potential case study could be the Mountain Collective Pass.

Interviewees identified a number of questions that should be addressed prior to further exploring and discussing a one-pass system. These questions include:

- What are best practices in interagency passes? Especially around revenue sharing/allocation, administration and implementation, and effects on ease of use, equity, and use of public lands.
- How will one-pass affect public use? Agency revenue?
- How much will it cost to administer?
- How much could and/or should this pass cost users?
- How much would it cost to recognize all existing exemptions in a one-pass system?

B. Consistency in the Recreational Access System

The proviso called for this assessment to identify “opportunities to enhance consistency in the way state and federal recreational access fees apply to various types of recreational users, including those that travel to public lands by motor vehicle, boat, bicycle, foot, or another method.” Interviewees diverged in their responses to this question.

Some agencies expressed an interest to more consistently require fees from public lands users (or it was perceived by users that agencies see users as a potential source of revenue). Some cited that user fees make up some to a substantial portion of agency budgets and others recognized that all public lands users utilize bathrooms, trails, and other infrastructure.

Many interviewees noted that the Discover Pass functions as a parking pass, which can be circumvented by parking elsewhere or biking or walking to the trailhead. According to these individuals, capturing the revenue from users who did not drive and park a personal vehicle in a

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designated parking spot might require a shift in how fees are collected. Some interviewees suggested that access fees could be based on group/party, rather than vehicle parking. This option, however, brings up several questions interviewees felt would need to be addressed, including:

- What would be the financial impact to users of use fee vs. access fee? To agencies?
- Would this system be cost efficient for agencies to enforce?
- How would this system be implemented?
- How and where would passes be purchased?
- What would be the allowed group/party size?

Other interviewees suggested that fees could be driven by use or activity, however, others suggested that this option would be seen as quantifying the "damage" a hiker or a biker inflicts on the land and create conflict between user types.

Users provided mixed responses on whether all users should pay to play on public lands, or not pay additionally if residents had already paid via state taxes. Several interviewees expressed a version of this sentiment: "the public has a right to access public lands. Passes should not restrict that access." Some interviewees also felt that a use fee would be an additional burden on individuals who utilized public transit (and especially to those individuals with low incomes); the next section on equity addresses this further.

Interviewees commonly expressed that the inconsistency in the recreational pass system lies in the variety of passes required to park on state lands. This is a challenge that emerged in the previous section on simplicity.

C. Equity in Recreational Access System

This assessment asked interviewees to identify opportunities to improve equity in the recreational access fee system and develop a comprehensive and consistent approach to exemptions and/or discounts to qualified users and groups.

In order to address overall equity in the recreational fee access system, interviewees identified a number of potential barriers individuals or user groups may experience in accessing public lands. Barriers and/or inequities identified by interviewees include: 1. Access fees – who pays? 2. Socio-economic, 3. Transportation, 4. Cultural / language, and 5. Availability.

- **Access fee – who pays?** Interviewees identified a number of potential inequities to different user groups. Many interviewees who purchase a hunting or fishing license (which often come with a vehicle access pass) and a Discover Pass, feel they pay twice to access WDFW lands, while a car full of "non-consumptive" users might only need one pass. Several interviewees suggested that hunters and anglers additionally pay for conservation through taxes on ammunition, for example. Others suggested that the current system encourages carpooling, and that while one pass is required, multiple members of the group may hold passes or make

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financial contributions to conservation. Many interviewees also noted that all Washington residents, through taxes, make some contribution to public land management.

- **Socio-economic:** Some interviewees said they would be willing to pay some amount more for a coordinated state/federal pass, but were concerned that such a pass would be cost prohibitive. One interviewee observed that \$10.00 (the cost of a day pass) could be the difference between paying for a child's afterschool activity or not. Many interviewees expressed concern that access and user fees, as well as licenses, especially if prices continue to increase, will lead to fewer and fewer young people recreating on public lands.
- **Transportation:** According to one interviewee, difficulties in utilizing public transportation to access public lands may present more of a barrier for limited income residents than a \$10.00 / day parking fee. Another interviewee observed that individuals using car sharing services may not fully utilize annual Discover Passes, since the pass is limited to two license plate numbers.
- **Culture / language:** Some interviewees suggested that the Discover Pass works for users who are literate in English and aware that a pass is required, and able to drive a personal vehicle.
- **Availability:** Several interviewees expressed concern for and a perception of diminishing availability of both public and private lands, for motor and non-motorized recreation, and increased crowding at available trails. Crowding on public lands, according to one interviewee, "forces people toward private lands, paying hundreds to thousands of dollars a year for access, to escape the crowds."

During this assessment, interviewees identified options to reduce barriers and/or increase equity in accessing public lands. These options include:

- **Reduced fee options:** A few interviewees indicated a willingness to pay more for a pass if discounts were available for individuals with low incomes. Some interviewees were supportive of free passes for volunteers, while others indicated that the time requirements may be prohibitive. The option to purchase a discounted Discover Pass, with the purchase of a hunting or fishing license, was also suggested.
- **Transportation:** Opportunities to reduce transit barriers include: apps or online resources to use public transportation and support for organizations or community programs providing outdoor education and access to low-income populations.
- **Communication and access to information:** Several interviewees said the pass system and regulations need to be easily communicated across cultures and other languages. They often cited increased simplicity in the pass system as a way to more easily overcome language and cultural barriers. Additionally, several interviewees suggested that it would be helpful for individuals with disabilities to better know what to expect, such as the accessibility levels of trails, bathrooms, and parking spaces.

i. Statewide Approach to Exemptions / Discounts

The proviso specifically calls on this assessment to identify “opportunities to develop a comprehensive and consistent statewide approach to recreational fee discounts and exemptions to social and other groups including, but not limited to, disabled persons, seniors, disabled veterans, foster families, low-income residents, and volunteers.” This section will first present challenges and benefits with the current exemptions and discounts, and then suggests opportunities for a statewide approach moving forward.

Many interviewees expressed support for granting free passes and often cited veterans, individuals with low-income, and youth as groups especially deserving. On the other hand, many interviewees, while simultaneously expressing support for a social group, expressed concern about the cost borne by agencies. These individuals went on to state that some beneficiaries of discounted/exempt passes, seniors for example, may be willing and able to pay more for a pass.

Beneficiaries of discounted/exempt passes talked about challenges navigating layers of policy and actually receiving passes that individuals are eligible to receive. Several interviewees observed that the exemption system started before the Discover Pass, so exemptions don’t apply to all lands within the Discover Pass, which makes the pass systems difficult for users to navigate.

Opportunities, identified by interviewees, for creating an improved statewide approach to exemptions:

- **Address barriers to access.** According to interviewees, these discounts should be systematic and the benefits to a specific population are evidenced based or else clearly defined. Interviewees often suggested that discounts should be based on socio-economics (to increase economic diversity among public land users) and/or youth (to foster stewardship in next generation). According to one interviewee, if an exempt pass for veterans is a “thank you for your service” that should be clearly acknowledged. As noted in the section on equity, many interviewees recognized that the cost of a pass may not be the only barrier to accessing public lands.
- **Cost.** Several interviewees suggested that an exemption policy should acknowledge and address projected revenue loss to agencies, gains to beneficiary group, and who pays to provide the benefit.
- **Consistency.** A few interviewees suggested that exemptions/discounts should apply to all lands within a pass system.

Several interviewees stated that discounted/exempt passes need to be easy to acquire (for example, make it available alongside another social program or benefit).

Interviewees also acknowledged that exemptions and discounts become moot if parking passes are eliminated and all funding for public lands comes from the general fund.

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Interviewees identified several questions and information needs around developing a comprehensive approach.

- Does a free pass actually allow or enable one to use public lands?
- What is the long term financial impact of existing exemptions?
- What would it cost to expand exemptions to all lands?

D. Fiscal Health and Stability of Agencies

The fourth and cross-cutting focal point of the proviso and this assessment is consideration of the fiscal health and stability of public land management. Both agencies and representatives of user groups mentioned the need for agencies to have sufficient and sustainable funding levels and expressed concern that current funding levels are not sufficient. Agencies, in particular, expressed a need for predictable budgets to facilitate long-term planning.

Primarily, interviewee responses circled around the question of who should pay for public lands – users, the general public, or some combination. Some interviewees suggested that user fees contribute to a sense of stewardship of public lands and resources and/or that users should “pay to play” on public lands. Many interviewees described the budget crises and emergence of the Discover Pass as a necessary means to fill some of the gap created by recent budget crises. Interviewees also talked about the chronic funding shortage and maintenance backlogs on public lands – for trail maintenance, cleaning trailhead restrooms, etc. Several interviewees perceived a lack of enforcement, both at the trailhead to enforce passes and in the backcountry to protect the natural resources. A few interviewees said they don’t mind paying fees and have grudgingly supported fee increases, however, they expressed frustration that, despite the increased fee revenue, facilities and trails are not well maintained.

Many interviewees stated that access to public lands should not come at a cost borne only by the user. They say public lands were created to serve as a benefit to the public and therefore should be funded by the public. According to one interviewee, “users do not equal revenue”—government has a duty to invest in public lands. The returns on this investment, according to these interviewees, can and should be measured in terms of the economic benefits of outdoor recreation to the state economy, to overall public health, and to ecosystem services.

Given overall funding shortfalls, and legislative priorities to fund education and mental health, many interviewees acknowledged that some funding will need to continue to come from users, at least short term. Most interviewees did not suggest a specific formulas regarding what portion of agency budgets should come from users and general public, but a few suggested that user fees should fund recreation management and the public (general fund) should pay for land and natural resource management.

Interviewees also identified opportunities to diversify funding for public lands. Examples included: establish taxes on bottled water, “treads” such as hiking boots and bike tires, and/or recreation gear,

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create donation opportunities, and develop public/private partnerships. However, some interviewees suggested that some of these options may be challenging to administer or produce nominal revenue. Many of these opportunities are consistent with recommendations by the Governor's Blue Ribbon Parks & Recreation Task Force.

Potential information needs and/or questions interviewees felt should be addressed include:

- How much do agencies need? How much does it cost to manage lands? What is the gap between pass revenue and general fund?
- How are fees used?
- What are the economic impacts of outdoor recreation on the Washington economy?
- What could and should be part of a long term public land management funding strategy?

E. Interest in a Collaborative Process

The proviso specifically calls for a collaborative process that “include[s] other relevant agencies and appropriate stakeholders.” During this assessment, interviewees were asked to identify appropriate topics for a collaborative process, who should be part of those conversations, and other elements of a collaborative process.

Almost all interviewees expressed interest in a collaborative process. Broad topics interviewees identified include: making pass system an easier user experience, defining barriers to accessing public lands and options to address barriers, exploring opportunities for an interagency pass, and consolidating/streamlining passes. Some said that the scope of the collaborative process would have to align with their organizational mission—reducing barriers for people with low incomes or disabilities to access—to justify their participation.

Most often interviewees identified broad categories or perspectives that should be part of a collaborative process. Potential participants suggested by interviewees include: agencies, the Legislature, user groups – which should include actual users/pass holders, not just advocacy organizations, entities that receive exempt/discounted passes, outdoor gear industry, social justice, Department of Revenue, tribes, Governor's Office, and the Recreation and Conservation Office. Several interviewees suggested that there could be multiple “tables” or small work groups to address specific questions. Several interviewees suggested that the Ruckelshaus Center should facilitate this process, citing the Center's current involvement and/or reputation as a neutral entity.

Interviewees also identified components or characteristics that should be part of a collaborative process. Suggestions include:

- A collaborative process should provide space for participants to build trust and share perspectives before starting to address the big issues.

- Participants should have the patience and commitment to stick with the process, a willingness to address broader issues, not just niche issue, and willingness to share and listen to others' perspectives.
- Parameters should be clearly defined and include a regulatory backstop.

F. Opportunities/Challenges on the Horizon

Interviewees also identified several challenges or opportunities that should be considered as this project moves beyond the assessment phase.

i. Additional licenses and/or exemptions

The Legislature could introduce additional licenses and/or exemptions which could further add to the volume of passes and licenses and complexity of the pass system while creating undefined financial affects to both users and agencies.

ii. Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act of 2016

The Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act authorized the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis to spend the next four years studying the outdoor recreation economy³. Data analysis and modeling will begin at the national level, but ultimately include state level statistics and forecasting. This study will help quantify the economic contributions of public lands to the state and country.

iii. Big Tent Coalition Outdoor Recreation Coalition

The Big Tent Coalition Outdoor Recreation Coalition is an association of outdoor recreation organizations, environmental organizations, and lands and conservancy groups. This coalition first came together in 2012 and seeks to "raise awareness of the importance of the outdoor recreation sector to Washington State."⁴ Interviewees suggested that the Big Tent Coalition could be a venue for the next phases of this project to connect with a diverse coalition of the outdoor recreation community. Their next annual rally will be held in Olympia in February 2017.

³ <https://www.outsideonline.com/2140261/outdoor-industry-about-become-serious-political-force>

⁴ <http://bigtentcoalition.info/Home/About>

IV. Recommendations for consideration

The purpose of this assessment was to begin to identify opportunities to “improve consistency, equity and simplicity in recreational access fee systems while accounting for the fiscal health and stability of public land management” in the State of Washington. This assessment also asked interviewees to identify opportunities for state and federal permit fee coordination, to enhance consistency in the way state and federal access fees apply to various user types, and to develop a statewide approach to exemptions.

Based on these parameters and the findings presented above, the research team offers the following recommendations (for an overview of these recommendations, see Appendix E).

A. Potential steps for immediate action

The Agency Core Team should continue to collaborate, providing project input and baseline information. Information that could be gathered by the agencies includes:

- current exemptions/discounts, who is eligible, how and where passes can be acquired, where exempt/discounted passes can be used;
- state and federal access passes available in Washington, where and how passes can be acquired, and when pass is required (both jurisdiction and timing); and
- define of fiscal health and stability of respective agencies. This definition should include:
 - cost of managing public lands and projected needs, including levels of enforcement and maintenance that can be provided at different funding levels, and
 - composition of agency budgets (how much comes from user fees, general fund, etc.).

The Agency Core Team, in partnership with representatives from key entities, and with neutral facilitation support should advance the composition, structure, and goals of a collaborative process.

B. Collaborative Process

Establish multi-sector Leadership Team composed of:

- Agency Core Team (as non-voting advisors, that can and should provide context, background, opinions, and any relevant input prior to any decision);
- User groups/pass holders, veterans, social/environmental justice, legislative leaders, Governor’s Office, and other key parties identified by the Leadership Team at its first meeting⁵. The Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs should also be consulted regarding tribes’ engagement.

⁵ To keep the group process manageable, ‘key parties’ should be limited to those whose support would be needed (or instrumental) in creating and implementing policy solutions.

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- Individuals who will represent their constituency/interest group/agency (and keeping them informed as needed), who are committed (or are willing to commit) to working toward a consensus solution and willing to share and listen to others' perspectives.

The Leadership Team should:

- Develop clear decision making protocols and ground rules (including process for seeking consensus, communicating with media and public, meeting frequency and location, working with researchers and issue-specific work groups).
- Articulate guiding values for the future of public land and recreation access systems in Washington and identify topics and composition of issue-specific work groups.
- Build common information base, including current landscape of passes (all exemptions, access passes, and restrictions in Washington); terminology (defining access pass, user fee, license); and fiscal health and needs of public land management.
- Analyze options identified by work groups and, where appropriate, develop policy, programmatic, and administrative recommendations for increasing simplicity, equity, and consistency in the recreation access fee system while accounting for the fiscal health of land management agencies.
- Oversee the preparation of a report that includes progress of the work groups and options and recommendations for consideration by the agencies and legislature.

Work groups should be tasked with:

- Generating and analyzing policy, programmatic, and administrative options. Potential issues/work groups areas of focus should at least include:
 - Simplicity and equity in the pass system;
 - coordinating access passes, including potential for a single pass; and
 - A statewide approach to exemptions.
- Identifying information needs, selecting an appropriate entity or entities to conduct research/analyze information, and guide the information-gathering/research (as needed).

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Timeline for a potential collaborative process:

January – February	Situation assessment finalized.
February	Leadership Team, work groups identified and contacted. Research/technical team formed and begins work.
March	Leadership Team and work groups convene (March - June, with additional meeting(s) in the fall to finalize the report). Work group refines information needs.
May - June	Research reporting to work groups and Leadership Team. Leadership Team analyzes options and, if appropriate, develops recommendations.
July - August	Report drafting.
September	Leadership Team agree on a final draft.
October	Present final draft to Legislature, agencies, interviewees, and key parties.
November	Finalize report.
December 1, 2017	Final report with recommendations submitted to the Legislature.

C. Potential topics for a collaborative process

Potential topics for the Leadership Team and work groups should include:

- Simplicity and equity in public land access systems;
- Opportunities to coordinate access systems, including potential for a single pass; and
- Opportunities to develop a comprehensive and statewide approach to exemptions.

The fiscal health and stability of land management agencies intersects with all of these issues and should be addressed accordingly: the Agency Core Team members will play an important role in ensuring this proviso element stays in the conversation.

i. Simplicity and equity in public land access systems

The Leadership Team should convene a work group to identify and explore opportunities to increase simplicity and equity in accessing public lands. Options for further discussion should include:

- How information is communicated and presented (e.g. how and where to buy a pass, why pass is required, trip planning, availability multiple languages, resources for individuals with disabilities);
- Transportation barriers (e.g. resources to use public transportation and/or car-shares to access trailheads);
- Socio-economic barriers; and
- Cultural barriers.

Work group will present options and analysis back to Leadership Team, including which options it makes sense to pursue, why or why not, and specific approaches or considerations to inform the Leadership Team's decision(s).

ii. Opportunities to coordinate passes, including potential for single pass

The Leadership Team should convene a Coordinated Pass Working Group (composed of key interests on the Leadership Team, as well as federal agencies that participate in America the Beautiful Pass).

Single pass option. The work group could begin by establishing a common information base on opportunities and barriers to creating a single pass. The member entities of this issue-specific group may have ways to provide some pieces, while others may be best researched and presented by a credible "third party" (outside) research entity or team. Suggested research questions include:

- What limitations exist in state and federal laws to the coordination of recreation access policies and fees? If so, how could these limitations be addressed?
- Are there best practices in interagency passes around the country, e.g. around revenue sharing, administration, and ease of use?

- How has coordination of interagency passes affected agencies? Land and resource management? Visitation and use?
- Research user preference(s) for state/federal pass option (both in addition to current passes and in place of them), vs. increasing the simplicity and usability of the Discover Pass and related state land fees.

Coordination of current passes. This work group could also identify opportunities to coordinate and streamline access and user fee systems. Options to explore could include:

- Alternate pass formats (e.g. window stickers, license plate tabs, electronic chips with readers at parking lot entrances);
- Alternate fee structures (e.g. multi-year passes, base fee with options to add endorsements for additional vehicles and/or access modes); and
- Consolidating and streamlining existing passes and fee structures.

The member entities of this issue-specific group may have ways to provide some pieces to build a common information base, while others may be best researched and presented by a credible “third party” (outside) research entity or team. Research questions could include:

- What are the financial implications to users and agencies of streamlining and coordinating passes?
- What are barriers and opportunities to enforcing and implementing access fee and user fee systems, including financial impacts to users and agencies?
- What cost efficiencies could be gained by alternate pass formats (such as a window sticker)?
- What are the implications of different fee structures (such as increasing/decreasing cost of the Discover Pass, base-household price with option to add additional vehicles) to users? To agencies?

This work group will present options and analysis back to Leadership Team, including:

- whether or not it makes sense to pursue a “single pass” for state and federal lands, including why or why not, and specific approaches or considerations to inform the Leadership Team’s decision(s);
- whether or not it makes sense to pursue enhanced consistency in the way fees apply to users, including why or why not, and specific approaches or considerations to inform the Leadership Team’s decision(s); and
- whether or not it makes sense to pursue enhanced coordination in access fees, including why or why not, and specific approaches or considerations to inform the Leadership Team’s decision(s).

iii. Opportunities to develop a comprehensive and statewide approach to exemptions

The Leadership Team should convene an Exemption Work Group, which includes the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Social and Health Services, Agency Core Team, and other key entities.

This work group might begin by building a common information base. The member entities of this issue-specific group may have ways to provide some pieces, while others may be best researched and presented by a credible “third party” (outside) research entity or team. Potential information needs include:

- What are the existing exemptions and discounted passes?
- What was the rationale or motivation associated with current exemptions?
- What is the makeup of exempt users in relation to all public land users?
- What are best practices in other states?
- What are current/projected costs of exempt and discounted passes?

The exemption work group should be tasked with identifying priorities, or not, for a statewide approach to exemptions. Considerations that could be incorporated in such an approach include: exemptions are informed by cost and who pays; and address barriers to accessing public lands, such as income.

Recommend back to Leadership Team how it makes sense to approach current and potential exemptions and specific approaches or considerations to inform the Leadership Team’s decision(s). These considerations should include: 1. Analysis of cost exemptions, 2. Rationale or motivation associated with current exemptions, and 3. Opportunities for “new or modified social group discounts and exemptions.”

V. APPENDICIES

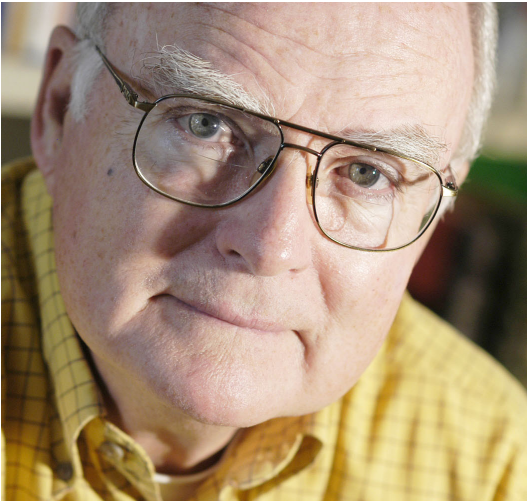
Appendix A: Excerpt from the legislative budget proviso (2ESHB 2376)

(3) \$250,000 of the recreation access pass account—state appropriation is provided solely for the commission, using its authority under RCW 79a.05.055(3) and in partnership with the department of fish and wildlife and the department of natural resources, to coordinate a process to develop options and recommendations to improve consistency, equity, and simplicity in the recreational access fee systems while accounting for the fiscal health and stability of public land management. The process must be collaborative and include other relevant agencies and appropriate stakeholders. The commission must contract with the William D. Ruckelshaus Center or another neutral third party to facilitate meetings and discussions with parties involved in the process and provide a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2017. The process must analyze and make recommendations on:

- a. opportunities for federal and state permit fee coordination, including the potential for developing a system that allows a single pass to provide access to federal and state lands;
- b. opportunities to enhance consistency in the way state and federal recreational access fees apply to various types of recreational users, including those that travel to public lands by motor vehicle, boat, bicycle, foot, or another method; and
- c. opportunities to develop a comprehensive and consistent statewide approach to recreational fee discounts and exemptions to social and other groups including, but not limited to, disabled persons, seniors, disabled veterans, foster families, low-income residents, and volunteers. This analysis must examine the cost of such a program, and should consider how recreational fee discounts fit into the broader set of benefits provided by the state to these social groups. This includes a review of the efficacy, purpose, and cost of existing recreational fee discounts and exemptions, as well as opportunities for new or modified social group discounts and exemptions. The department of veterans affairs and the department of social health and services must be included in this portion of the process.

THE WILLIAM D. RUCKELSHAUS CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON



"Collaborative problem solving is an enormously powerful approach to resolving conflicts; it holds great promise for better, faster and more sustainable policy decisions. With the combined resources of our premier research institutions, this center establishes an invaluable neutral forum for addressing some of our most complex and pressing challenges."

– WILLIAM D. RUCKELSHAUS

For more information on the William D. Ruckelshaus Center, please visit our web site at:
<http://RuckelshausCenter.wsu.edu>

About the Ruckelshaus Center

Mission:

The mission of the William D. Ruckelshaus Center is to help parties involved in complex public policy challenges in the State of Washington and the Pacific Northwest tap university expertise to develop collaborative, durable, and effective solutions.

Vision:

The Center envisions a future in which government leaders, policy makers, and citizens routinely employ tools of collaborative decision making to design, conduct, and implement successful public policy processes.

Identity:

We are a joint effort of Washington State University, hosted and administered by the WSU Extension, and the University of Washington, hosted through the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Policy and Governance. Building on the unique strengths of these two institutions, the Center applies university resources and knowledge towards solving challenging public policy issues.

Values:

Collaboration, consensus, neutrality, knowledge, education, inquiry, and civility.

What we do:

The Ruckelshaus Center partners with university faculty, staff, and students to help people work together to develop shared solutions to challenging policy issues. Areas where we work include:

- Community and Economic Development
- Land Use
- Natural Resources
- Transportation
- Agriculture
- Healthcare
- Tribal, Federal, State, and Local Governance

We build problem-solving capacity in the region by helping individuals and organizations better understand, initiate, participate in, and lead collaborative public policy efforts.

Who we serve:

The Center assists public, private, tribal, nonprofit, and other leaders to build consensus, resolve conflicts, and develop innovative, shared solutions for Washington and the Pacific Northwest.

"Compliments to the Ruckelshaus Center for helping us all to forge a path forward. We certainly wouldn't have gotten to this point without you."

—KAREN VALENZUELA
Governor's Chehalis Work Group



How We Do it:

- Provide a neutral and safe forum for parties to constructively define shared goals and resolve differences
- Conduct a situation assessment to determine how parties should proceed with a collaborative approach
- Provide facilitation, mediation, dispute resolution, project management, strategic planning, and other services that help parties reach consensus and resolve issues
- Provide diverse groups with a common information base via university research and fact finding
- Provide knowledge, training, and tools to improve the collaborative problem-solving abilities of individuals and organizations
- Host policy discussions in the form of guest lectures, conferences, and our Chairman's Circle and Statesperson luncheons

Governance and Funding:

The Center has offices in Seattle and Pullman. It is guided by an advisory board chaired by William Ruckelshaus and composed of prominent leaders representing a broad range of constituencies and geographic locations in the region. Funding for the Center is sought from a mix of sources, including foundations, corporations, individuals, agencies, other state and federal sources, and fee for service contracts when appropriate.

WSU Extension and UW Evans School of Public Policy and Governance programs and employment are available to all without discrimination.

5/10/16

To learn more about the Center, contact:

William D. Ruckelshaus Center

121 Hulbert Hall	901 Fifth Avenue
PO Box 646248	Suite 2900
Pullman, WA 99164-6248	Seattle, WA 98164-2040
(509) 335-2937	(206) 428-3021

RuckelshausCenter@wsu.edu

The William D. Ruckelshaus Center Advisory Board

Bill Ruckelshaus, Board Chair
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School of Public Policy and Governance*+

Jerry Baldasty - UW Interim Provost+

Ernesta Ballard - Ballard & Associates*

Dan Bernardo - WSU Interim President and Provost+

Brian Blake - WA State House of Representatives+

Ana Mari Cauce - UW President+

Megan Clubb - Baker Boyer Bank

Elizabeth Cowles - The Cowles Company

Jack Creighton - Madrona Venture Group

Greg Devereux - WA Federation of State Employees

Norm Dicks - Van Ness Feldman

Urban Eberhart - Farmer & Irrigator

Bob Drewel - WSU North Puget Sound**

Daniel J. Evans - Daniel J. Evans and Associates

Anne Farrell - The Seattle Foundation (ret.)**

Karen Fraser - WA State Senate+

William Gates (Emeritus) - Bill & Melinda Gates
Foundation

Peter Goldmark - WA State Department of Natural
Resources

Jay Gordon - WA State Dairy Federation*

Slade Gorton - US Senator, R-WA (ret.)

Lisa J. Graumlich - UW College of the Environment+

Christine Gregoire - Governor of WA State (former)

Gerald Grinstein - Madrona Venture Group**

Heather Hansen - WA Friends of Farms and Forests

Denis Hayes - Bullitt Foundation

Joe King - Joe King & Associates*

Rich Koenig - WSU Extension*+

Martha Kongsgaard - Kongsgaard | Goldman
Foundation**

Jay Manning - Cascadia Law Group

Dave McShea - Perkins Coie

Ralph Munro - WA Secretary of State (ret.)*

Bill Neukom - K&L Gates

Linda Evans Parlette - WA State Senate+

Molly Pengra - Pengra Capital

V. Lane Rawlins - WSU President (ret.)

Michael J. Tate - WSU Office of the Provost (ret.)

Kellye Y. Testy - UW School of Law+

Kristen Tetteh - Washington Global Health Alliance

Jim Waldo - Gordon Thomas Honeywell LLP

Paul Ward - Yakama Nation*

Terry Williams - The Tulalip Tribes

Cindy Zehnder - Gordon Thomas Honeywell LLP

Hans Zeiger - WA State House of Representatives+

+ Ex-Officio Member

*Executive Committee Member

**Development Committee Member

Appendix C: Interviewees

American Whitewater	Thomas O'Keefe
Audubon Washington	Trina Bayard
Backcountry Horsemen of Washington	Kathy Young
Coastal Conservation Association	Scott Sigmon
Colorado Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry	Luis Benitez
Community Transportation Association of the Northwest	Ryan Acker
Doctor Roscoe's Holistic Bike Repair	Justin Black
Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance	Yvonne Kraus
Gordon Thomas Honeywell	Jim Waldo
Governor's Office, Outdoor Recreation and Economic Development	Jon Snyder
Hunter's Heritage Council	Allen Ernst
Hunter's Heritage Council	Mark Pidgeon
King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks	Richard Gelb
Kittitas County Field and Stream	Deborah Essman
Latino Outdoors Washington	Michelle Piñon
Mountains to Sound Greenway	Doug Schindler
National Park Service	Chip Jenkins
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission / Squaxin Island Council	Jim Peters
Northwest Marine Trade Association	George Harris
Northwest Motorcycle Association	Rick Dahl
Office of Financial Management	Jim Cahill
Outcomes by Levy, Big Tent Outdoor Recreation Coalition	Doug Levy
Outdoor Research	Dan Nordstrom
REI, Inc.	Mark Berejka
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	Bill Richardson
Trout Unlimited	Nick Chambers, Lisa Pelly
Trust for Public Lands	Paul Kundtz

Situation Assessment of Recreation Access Fee Systems in Washington State

U.S. Forest Service, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest	Sarah Lang, Dave Redmond, Mike Schlaffman
U.S. Forest Service, Region 6	Jocelyn Biro
Vail Resorts	Kathy Schwitzer
Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife	Paul Dahmer, Michael Hobbs, Melinda Posner, Joe Stohr, Peter Vernie
Washington Department of Natural Resources	Cyndi Comfort, Glenn Glover, Brock Milliern
Washington Department of Social & Health Services, (Aging and Long Term Support Administration)	Kristi Knudsen
Washington Department of Social & Health Services, (Behavioral Health Administration, Developmental Disabilities Administration)	Jennifer Bliss, Tom Farrow
Washington Department of Social & Health Services, (Children's Administration)	David Del Villar Fox
Washington Department of Social & Health Services, (Economic Services Administration)	Erik Peterson, Shane Riddle
Washington Department of Veterans Affairs	Heidi Audette
Washington Federation of State Employees / American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees	Dennis Eagle
Washington House of Representatives	Rep. Steve Tharinger
Washington Off Highway Vehicle Alliance	Byron Stuck
Washington Recreation and Conservation Office	Kaleen Cottingham
Washington Senate	Senator Linda Evans Parlette
Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission	Mark Brown, Daniel Farber, Pat Lantz, Virginia Painter, Todd Tatum
Washington State Parks Foundation	John Floberg
Washington Trails Association	Andrea Imler
Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition	Andrea McNamara Doyle
Washingtonians for Wildlife Conservation	Jim Goldsmith
Yakama Nation	Paul Ward

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. Please tell us about yourself (affiliations, title, roles, and responsibilities) and your interest in public lands recreation access in Washington state. What specific recreation does your group engage in? And in what region(s)?
2. In early 2016, the Washington State legislature asked the WA Parks and Recreation Commission, WA Department of Natural Resources, and WA Department of Fish and Wildlife to coordinate a process to develop options and recommendations to (1.) improve consistency, equity, and simplicity in recreational access fee systems while (2.) accounting for the fiscal health and stability of public land management.
 - a. What would success look like for achieving (1.) above?
 - b. What would success look like for achieving (2.) above? Explain what's working well and where there is room for improvement.
3. Recognizing Washington's commitment to provide equitable access to all Washingtonians, fiscally sustain recreation management operations, and manage public lands, what key issues need to be addressed? What values or objectives should be prioritized? What would you most like to see in public recreation access policy? Least? If you could change one thing about public land access in Washington what would it be and why?
 - a. How does the current system effect you? Please differentiate between barriers and annoyances.
 - b. How would you rank these key issues in order of priority? Why?
 - c. Are there barriers to addressing these key issues? If so, how might they be overcome?
 - d. What data or information is needed to understand or successfully address these issues?
 - e. Do you have access to or can you provide that information?
 - f. Who would be an appropriate information provider and analyst? Would WSU and/or UW be able and appropriate to provide data or analysis?
4. The Legislature asked the WA Parks and Recreation Commission to analyze and make recommendations on several areas of public recreation access. Please respond to the following questions from your perspective:
 - a. What benefits or impediments might result from a *coordinated system* of state and federal access passes? What challenges might arise from coordinating state and

federal recreation access? How would your answers change if there could be a *single pass or an open system* that provided access to both state and federal lands?

- b. Does Washington's current access pass accurately and consistently capture revenue from all users (including but not limited to those that access public lands on foot, by bike, on horseback, by boat, by air, by car or by other vehicles, etc.)? How could the system improve and provide more consistent access? More consistent revenue?
 - c. How can Washington ensure comprehensive, equitable and consistent approach to provide discounts and/or exemptions to qualified users and groups? What should the priorities be for any discount or exemption program? What currently works well? What could be improved and how?
 - d. Who should pay to ensure that Washington provides consistent, equitable and simple access to public recreation lands? What percentage of public recreation access fees should be covered by the state and/or by users? Is there an optimum or preferred cost share? Does the share depend on the type of user? The type of land? The amount of demand? The quality of lands and access?
 - e. How might technology improve access to public recreation lands? How might technology improve public access fee systems on state lands, federal lands, or both?
5. Could other examples provide instructive guidance for Washington's recreation access programs (other states, other nations, other non-governmental programs)? What works better? What should Washington avoid?
 6. In a typical collaborative process, stakeholders are asked to share perspectives, define issues, identify interests and common ground, and then generate options and processes for addressing issues and seeking agreement.

Earlier we asked about key issues you feel need to be addressed:

- a. Now that we've talked about some of the issues in detail, what would you like to add or reprioritize?
 - b. Do you feel there is potential for using a collaborative process to address any of these issues?
 - c. If the issues you identified are not resolved in a collaborative process, how do you think they could be resolved?
 - d. What would be the key topic for you?
7. If at the conclusion of this assessment a recommendation were made to develop a collaborative process to address key issues in public recreation access fees, what steps should

that process include? Should the Ruckelshaus Center convene the process? If yes, why? If no, who should convene the process?

- a. Who would need to be involved?
 - b. Would you be willing to participate in a collaborative process? Why or why not?
 - c. Would you be willing to delegate to an individual or organization that could accurately represent your perspective? Who could that be?
8. Are there others we should be talking with about these issues? [organizations, names, recreation types]
 9. What questions should we be asking as a part of these interviews that we didn't ask?
 10. Do you have any questions for us?

Appendix E: Overview of recommendations for consideration

Potential steps for immediate action:

The Agency Core Team should continue to collaborate, providing project input and baseline information. Information that could be gathered includes: 1. current exemptions and discounted passes; 2. state and federal access passes in Washington; and 3. fiscal health and stability of respective agencies.

The Agency Core Team, in partnership with representatives from key entities, and with neutral facilitation support should advance the composition, structure and goals of a collaborative process.

Collaborative Process

The Leadership Team should: 1. develop clear decision making protocols and ground rules, 2. Articulate guiding values for the future of public land and recreation access systems in Washington, 3. Identify topics and composition of issue-specific work groups, and 4. analyze options and, where appropriate, develop policy, programmatic, and administrative recommendations.

Issue-specific work groups should 1. Generate and analyze options, 2. Identify information needs and appropriate provider (as needed), and 3. Present options and analysis to the Leadership Team.

Potential topics for the Leadership Team and work groups should include:

1. Simplicity and equity in public land access;
2. Opportunities to coordinate access systems, including potential for a single pass; and
3. Opportunities to develop a comprehensive and statewide approach to exemptions.

The fiscal health and stability of land management agencies intersects with all of these issues and should be addressed accordingly.

Simplicity and equity in public land access

Options for further discussion include: 1. How information is communicated and presented and 2. Addressing barriers to accessing public lands (e.g. transportation, socio-economic, and cultural).

Opportunities to coordinate access systems, including potential for a single pass

Options for further discussion and research include: 1. Establish a common information base on opportunities and barriers to creating a single pass and 2. Identify opportunities to coordinate and streamline access and user fee systems (options could include alternate pass formats and fee structures).

Opportunities to develop a comprehensive and statewide approach to exemptions

The objectives of this work group should include 1. Analysis of cost of exemptions, 2. Rationale or motivation associated with current exemptions, and 3. Opportunities for “new or modified social group discounts and exemptions.” [Note: these objectives are taken directly from the proviso.]