

RECREATION FEES IN WASHINGTON STATE

Final Report
December 15, 2017



THE WILLIAM D. RUCKELSHAUS CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

The William D. Ruckelshaus Center is a neutral resource for collaborative problem solving in the State of Washington and the Pacific Northwest, dedicated to assisting public, private, tribal, non-profit, and other community leaders in their efforts to build consensus and resolve conflicts around difficult public policy issues. It is a joint effort of Washington State University hosted and administered by WSU Extension and the University of Washington hosted by the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Policy and Governance.

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Recreation Fees In Washington State: Options and Recommendations

A Report to the Washington State Legislature pursuant to
SSB5883, Section 303(5), 2016 Legislative Session

Prepared for: Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission,
in partnership with the Washington State Department of Fish and
Wildlife, and Washington State Department of Natural Resources

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Executive Summary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

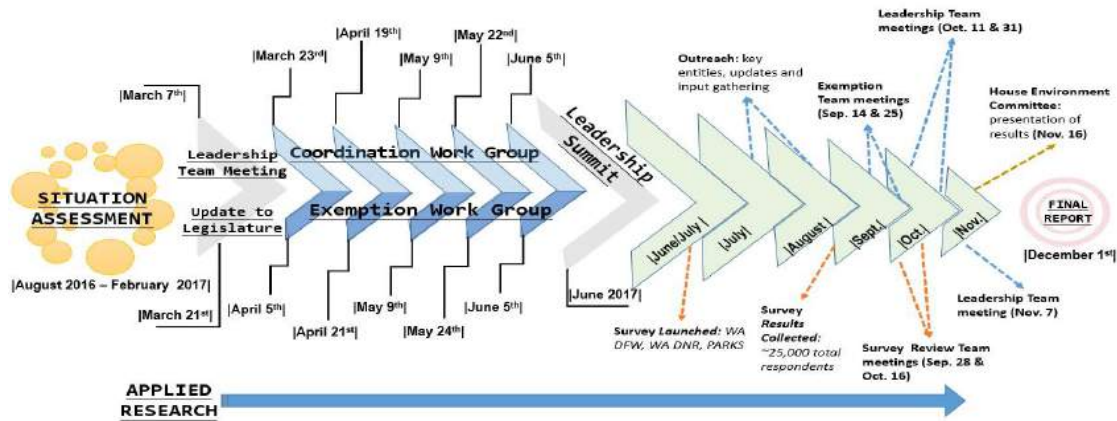
Currently, more than 20 unique passes and permits¹ are available for recreation on state and federal lands in Washington (including state and federal, daily, annual, weekly, and seasonal). The pass(es) that may be required depend on the agency, trailhead, season, activity, mode of access, and whether an individual qualifies for a free/reduced fee program. These passes, depending on the agency, come in the form of a rearview mirror “hang tag,” window cling, sticker, or plastic card that may be linked to a specific individual, household, or up to two license plates. Specific activities and/or areas may require additional fees or permits (e.g. backcountry hiking permits, hunting/fishing licenses, off-road vehicle (ORV) tabs, etc.). The myriad of pass permutations results in uncertainty for public land users about what pass is needed where (and when, and why).

To begin addressing these challenges, the 2016 Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, in partnership with the Washington Department of Natural Resources and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, to work with the William D. Ruckelshaus Center² (Center) or another neutral third party 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.”** The budget proviso also requested exploration of the potential for “federal and state permit fee coordination,” including a “single pass to provide access to state and federal lands,” enhance consistency in way fees apply based on mode of travel and a “comprehensive and consistent approach to recreational fee discounts and exemptions.”

Based on the findings of a Situation Assessment, conducted from August 2016-February 2017, the Center recommended the development of a “Leadership Team” with representatives from user groups, pass holders, and veteran’s advocates. The Leadership Team commissioned issue-specific work groups tasked with gathering information, generating options, and reporting findings. The Leadership Team, informed by the work groups, ultimately finalized recommendations.

¹ Although sometimes perceived as such, these passes and permits are not necessarily parking permits. Some passes grant “motor vehicle access” while others must only be displayed at authorized fee sites or in association with specific activities. Some agencies can charge access or entrance fees, others may not. This process uses the terms “passes” or “recreation fees” to refer to the many passes and permits that have specific meanings to the agency with which the pass or permit is affiliated.

² The William D. Ruckelshaus Center is a joint effort of Washington State University and the University of Washington whose mission is to help parties involved in complex public policy challenges in the state of Washington and the Pacific Northwest tap university expertise to create collaborative, durable and effective solutions.



The above figure depicts work coordinated by the Ruckelshaus Center, including key dates and targets. Since August 2016, participants have shared perspectives, identified information needs, and developed work products to inform the development of packages of options to achieve the principles in the Legislative proviso and guide selection of preferred options and recommendations.

Guiding Principles: Simplicity and Consistency, Equity, and Fiscal Health

The proviso directed this process to identify opportunities to increase simplicity, consistency, and equity while maintaining agency fiscal health. The Leadership Team developed and applied the following definitions of these terms as guiding principles for recreation fees in Washington.

Simplicity & Consistency

Individuals should not need to understand agency boundaries to navigate the recreation fee system and should be able to easily access information to confidently identify what pass/permit is needed where and when. Uniformity should exist across land management agencies on pricing, exemptions, mode of access, and activities covered by recreation fees. Product(s) should be easy to purchase/acquire and use. Agencies and retailers should be able to clearly communicate the fee system and help user purchase correct pass(es).

Equity

The people who access public recreation lands should mirror Washington state's diverse population. The Legislature, in partnership with the public land management agencies, should pursue opportunities that minimize or eliminate barriers (financial, informational, accessibility, etc.) for individuals to use public lands.

Agency Fiscal Health

Recognizing that agencies manage natural, cultural, and historic resources for the benefit of the entire state, public recreation land management agencies should receive sustainable and stable funding from diverse sources, including the State General Fund and/or other broad-based public funding.

Leadership Team: Options and Recommendations

With the complexity of the existing system of recreational fees and passes, improvements must contain multiple, interdependent elements. To address this, the Leadership Team developed and discussed many packages of potential solutions. Several were considered, but not recommended (see full report); three packages are recommended (see overview below, or full report for more detail), each containing several interconnected components. *All three packages assume that fees remain for backcountry permits, hunting and fishing licenses, campgrounds, outdoor recreational vehicle (ORV) tabs, and other special use permits/passes and that agencies retain current levels of General Fund Support.*

The “Pass-Free Access Package” is the preferred recommendation, based on the voting members of the Leadership Team seeing it as the best fit with the parameters of the proviso. The “Two-Vehicle Pass System - Building on Success Package” and “One-Vehicle Pass System - Reduced Fees Package” are also recommended as potential improvements to the status quo.

Pass-Free Access Package

This is the preferred recommendation of the voting members of the Leadership Team, concluding that it is the best fit with the guiding principles/parameters of the proviso. This package replaces the Discover Pass and other state recreation passes with a source of broad-based public funding, resulting in the simplest, most consistent and equitable fee system and stable funding for land management agencies. Broad-based public funding reduces the need for exemptions and discounted passes. The funding source given the most consideration was a mandatory public land management fee at the time of vehicle registration; however, the Leadership Team did not prescribe this source and was open to other funding methods. With more Washingtonians supporting public land management, further fiscal analysis on a registration fee should begin in the \$7-15 per vehicle range. Under this package, agency budgets should still include allocations from the State General Fund.

Two-Vehicle Pass System, Building on Success Package

This package is also recommended as a potential improvement to the status quo. It recognizes the successes of the Discover Pass program, while identifying opportunities to (a) simplify and bundle the many state passes that currently exist, (b) pursue the development of a pass that would work on state and federal lands in Washington, and (c) evaluate and standardize exempt/discounted passes. Under this package, individuals who recreate on public lands would continue to support recreation operations/programming through the purchase of user-based passes/fees. Fiscal analysis is required to identify consistent price point to user (starting in \$30-35 range) and mechanisms to adjust price for inflation. This package recognizes that fees can support some recreation management needs, but not all agency funding needs so agencies should receive support from the State General Fund.

Single-Vehicle Pass System with Reduced Fees Package

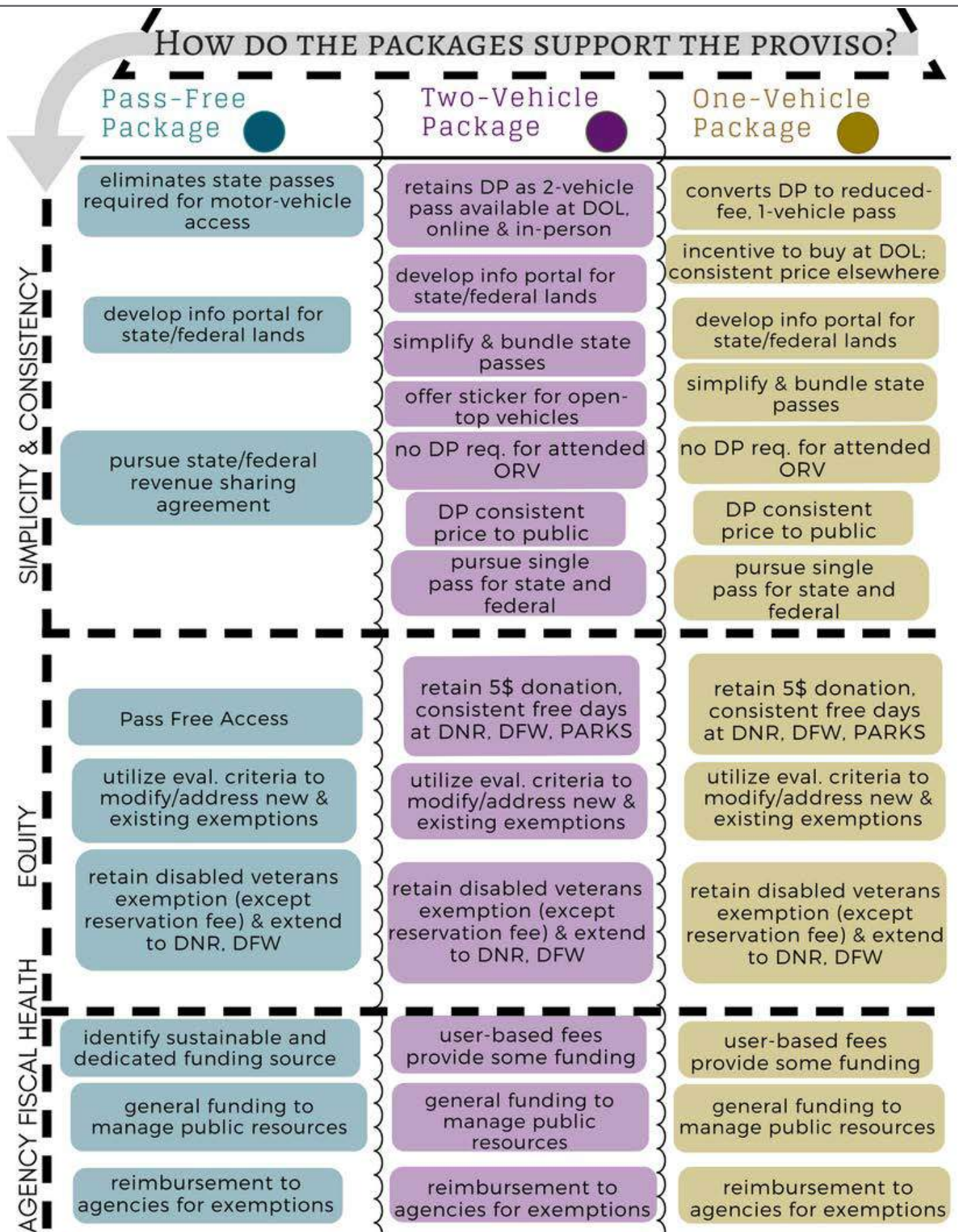
This package was also recommended as a potential improvement to the status quo. It has many similarities to the Two-Vehicle package. It identifies opportunities to simplify and bundle state passes, pursues the development of a state/federal pass, and evaluates and standardize exemptions. But instead of a household, two-vehicle pass, the Discover Pass would become a lower-priced, single-vehicle pass, potentially required in conjunction with more activities such as camping (at State Parks) or hunting (at WDFW managed lands). A lower price would enable more households to participate in the Discover Pass program and recreate on state-managed lands. To encourage participation, buying a Discover Pass at the

time of vehicle registration would be the incentivized option. Individuals who chose not to buy a pass at the time of registration, and/or out-of-state visitors, could buy a higher-priced pass at a later date online or in-person. Fiscal analysis is required to determine pricing (starting at \$15-20 range) and mechanisms to adjust for inflation. Under this package, agency budgets should still include allocations from the State General Fund.

Common Elements Across Packages

Each package presents a different, yet internally cohesive approach to increasing simplicity, consistency, and equity while maintaining agency fiscal health. However, some elements are consistent across multiple packages or would not preclude progress towards a specific package.

- **Access To and Usability Of Information:** encourage/support state agencies (DNR, WDFW, and State Parks) to coordinate with federal agencies and other appropriate entities to develop a common information portal.
- **State/Federal Fee Coordination:** encourage/support state agencies to engage with federal agencies to develop a single pass valid for state and federal recreation lands in Washington, along with a corresponding revenue-sharing agreement.
- **Implement Policy of Consistent Free Days** at state managed recreation lands.
- **Motor-Vehicle Access:** eliminate need for attended dual-registered ORVs to display a Discover Pass.
- **Informed Pricing:** prior to any decision to change products or prices conduct fiscal and cost/benefit analysis, accounting for price elasticity, inflation, and parameters of fee/funding mechanism described in package(s)
- **Statewide Approach to Exemptions/Discounted Passes:**
 - Develop and adopt statutory language requiring agencies and the Legislature to apply principles of the the fiscal and social impact evaluation criteria/tool to existing and proposed exemptions; and
 - Retain exemptions for disabled veterans, except the reservation transaction exemption, and extend free day-use access to DNR and WDFW.
- **State Funding to Agencies:**
 - To increase usability of facilities/amenities;
 - Reimburesment to implement exemptions/discount programs; and
 - To manage cultural, historic, and other public resources.



Next Steps

Project Wrap-Up: The Leadership Team provided guidance and oversight as the Center compiled this report. Members of the Leadership and Agency Core Teams, as well as other interested entities, had an opportunity to review the final draft for factual errors before it was finalized.

The proviso required a “report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature.” In addition to submitting the final written report, the Center, members of the Agency Core Team, and Leadership Team provided presentations to the House Environment Committee and House Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs Committee.

Implementation: Some elements within the packages are ready for implementation, while others require further data gathering and careful analysis and/or require further collaboration by various combinations of state and federal agencies, the Legislature, and interested parties.

The legislature and agencies should complete the work of this process by conducting a fiscal cost/benefit analysis, accounting for price elasticity, mechanisms to adjust for inflation, and parameters of fee/funding mechanism described in package(s) prior to any decision to change products or prices.

Each package presents a different, yet cohesive approach to increasing simplicity, consistency, and equity while maintaining agency fiscal health. However, some elements are consistent across multiple packages or would not preclude progress towards a pass-free package (i.e. policy of consistent free days at state managed recreation lands). Implementation of many of these elements can be led by the state agencies, but may require support from the Legislature. Regarding the development of a regional state/federal pass, state land management agencies, with support from the Legislature, should engage with regional federal fee program managers at US Forest Service, US Bureau of Reclamation, US Bureau of Land Management, US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service (including Interagency Pass program).

The agencies and Leadership Team look forward to working with the Governor and Legislature to understand your preferences moving forward.



1. Recreation Fees In Washington State: Project Overview

RECREATION FEES IN WASHINGTON STATE:

PROJECT OVERVIEW

During the 2016 supplemental legislative session, the Washington Legislature provided direction and funding to the Washington Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks), 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 established an “Agency Core Team” to jointly and cooperatively oversee the project. The legislative proviso required 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 State Parks 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 tap university expertise in order to develop collaborative, durable, and effective solutions (see Appendix B).

Phase I: Assessment of Recreation Fees In Washington State

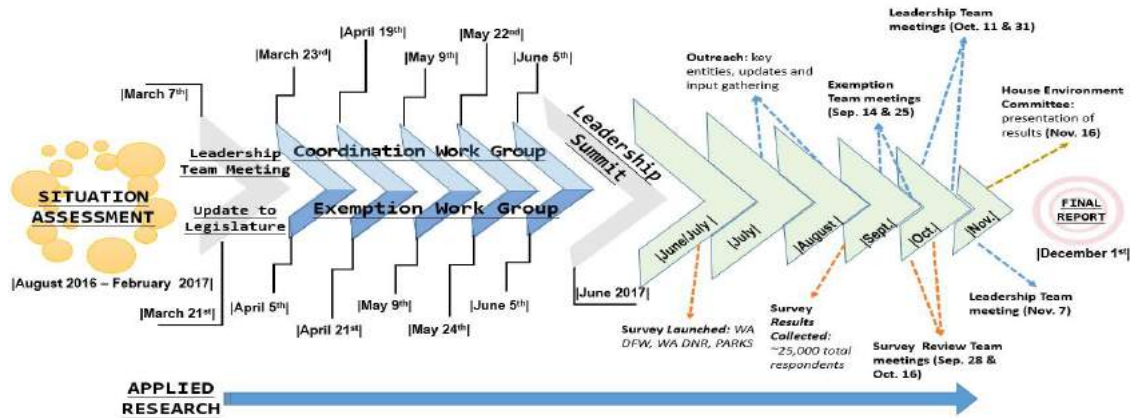
The Agency Core Team contracted with the Center to conduct a situation assessment and, if appropriate based on the outcomes of the assessment, design and facilitate a collaborative process, oversee data collection/analysis, and other potential needed steps identified through the assessment.

From August 2016 through January 2017, the research team, comprised of Center faculty and staff, conducted 48 interviews with 63 individuals. 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 *Situation Assessment of Recreation Access Fee Systems in Washington State* was released February 2017 and can be accessed from the Center's website.

Phase II: Collaborative Process to Develop Options and Recommendations

Based upon the findings of the Situation Assessment, the Center's project team developed recommendations for the collaborative process held during 2017. Development of a “Leadership Team” was one of these, which included representatives from recreation user groups, pass holders, veteran's advocates. Additional representatives from other key constituencies were to be identified by the Leadership Team at its first meeting and subsequently invited to participate. The Assessment advised that the chosen representatives should be “committed (or willing to commit) to working toward a consensus solution and willing to share and listen to others’ perspectives (Stenovec & Nichols, 2017, p. 20). The Leadership Team decided to pursue consensus as its preferred means of decision-making. Agency Core Team members participated in Leadership Team and work group meetings, providing technical advice and guidance prior to decisions.



The above figure depicts work coordinated by the Ruckelshaus Center, including key dates and targets. Since August 2016, participants have shared perspectives, identified information needs, and developed work products to inform the development of packages of options to achieve the principles in the Legislative proviso and guide selection of the preferred options and recommendations.

The Situation Assessment also outlined recommended tasks for the Leadership Team. This included the development of topics for, and composition of, issue-specific work groups. A Leadership Team met in March to develop ground rules and decision-making protocols and provide direction and scope for two work groups (see below for more discussion on objectives of work groups), which met throughout the spring of 2017. The Leadership Team then reconvened in September to analyze options developed by the work groups and finalize recommendations to the Legislature.

Legislative Involvement

Washington legislative staff attended meetings, received a separate briefing on the project process, and otherwise stayed apprised of this process, providing perspective as requested and appropriate.

Agency Core Team

Representatives from State Parks, DNR, WDFW, and the Governor's Office served as advisors. In this role, these individuals provided context, background, advice, and other relevant input prior to any decision facing the Leadership Team, along with subject matter expertise and information at (and between) meetings when asked. They did not serve as voting members.

Coordination Work Group

The Coordination Work Group was tasked with identifying opportunities to increase simplicity and consistency in the fee system – including the potential of a single pass for state and federal lands in Washington. This work group worked with a subcontractor possessing systems mapping expertise and extensive knowledge of the recreation fee landscape. These mapping exercises helped build common understanding of different perspectives on the fee system, and provided important context for the development of scenarios and options for consideration.

AGENCY CORE TEAM

WA State Parks

Office of The Governor:
Outdoor Recreation &
Economic DevelopmentWA Dept. of Natural
ResourcesWA Dept. of Fish
and Wildlife

LEADERSHIP TEAM

WA Dept. of
Veterans
AffairsWA Federation
of State
EmployeesUS Forest
ServiceUS Fish &
Wildlife ServiceInterim
Community
Development
AssociationOutcomes by
Levy, LLCWA State Parks
Foundation

Cowlitz Tribe

Washington Off-
Highway Vehicle
AllianceEvergreen
Mountain Bike
AllianceBackcountry
Horsemen of
WashingtonWashington
Trails
AssociationNational Park
ServiceWashington Wildlife
Recreation CoalitionHunter's
Heritage CouncilNW Marine
Trade
AssociationWashington Federation
of State EmployeesVeterans
Legislative
Coalition

COORDINATION WORK GROUP

Recreation
Equipment Inc.
(REI)Coastal
Conservation
AllianceWashington
Trails Assn.US Forest
ServiceHunter's
Heritage
CouncilWashington Off-
Highway Vehicle
Alliance

Cowlitz Tribe

Evergreen
Mountain Bike
AllianceWA State
ParksGov. Office,
Outdoor
RecreationWA Dept. of Fish
and WildlifeWA Dept. of
Natural
Resources

EXEMPTION WORK GROUP

WA Dept. of
Veterans
AffairsWA State Parks
FoundationWA State
ParksEconomic Services Administration,
Dept. of Social and Health ServicesUS Forest
ServiceInterim Community
Development
AssociationWA Dept. of Fish
and WildlifeGov. Office,
Outdoor
RecreationWA Dept. of
Natural
ResourcesVeterans
Legislative
CoalitionSalmon for
SoldiersWashington Federation
of State Employees

SURVEY WORK GROUP

Washington Off-
Highway Vehicle
AllianceWA State
ParksWA Dept. of Fish
and WildlifeWA Dept. of
Natural
ResourcesWashington
Trails
Association

ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION

Recreation
Conservation
OfficeDiscover Your
NorthwestBureau of Land
ManagementNational Forest
FoundationWA Dept. of
LicensingBig Tent
Outdoor
Rec.
CoalitionAging Support,
DSHSFoster Parents of
WASermonti Public
AffairsOutdoor
ResearchChildren's
Administration,
DSHS

Outdoors for All

Developmental
Disability
CouncilGovernor's Committee
on Disability Issues &
EmploymentDisability Rights
WashingtonNational Park Service
(Regional and DC
offices)Developmental Disabilities
Administration, DSHS

For a complete list of all organizations that participated in and/or provided expertise in this process, see Appendix C.

Exemption Work Group

The Exemption Work Group was tasked with identifying existing exempt/discounted fee passes in Washington and their efficacy, purpose, and overall costs to agencies, as well as addressing a host of related challenges and opportunities. The work group scoped the possibility of a statewide, comprehensive approach to exemptions, while reviewing the barriers to access among Washington residents. The group also considered exemptions in context within the broader suite of benefits offered by the state.

Survey Work Group

Some members of the above-mentioned groups provided additional time and guidance to the Project Team as it analyzed data from and developed a report on the public opinion survey that informed the Leadership Team's recommendations. (See Appendix D for Survey Analysis Executive Summary.)

Additional Consultation

Recognizing that the agencies, organizations, and interests affected by recreation fees is extensive and/or not everyone was able to participate in the collaborative process, the Center convened additional conversations to gather expertise and perspectives to integrate that information into the collaborative process. All interviewees from the Situation Assessment and key parties identified by the work groups or Leadership Team received a mid-project update and final report.

The Center also coordinated with the Governor's office to send letters to chairs of all 29 federally-recognized tribes requesting their guidance on whether and how their respective tribe would like to participate in the process. Michael Iyall, Cowlitz Tribe, participated extensively and several others asked to be kept informed.

Project Team

Project team included staff and faculty from the Ruckelshaus Center, WSU's Division of Governmental Studies and Services, and sub-contractor Laurie Thorpe.



2. Washington State Outdoor Recreation System



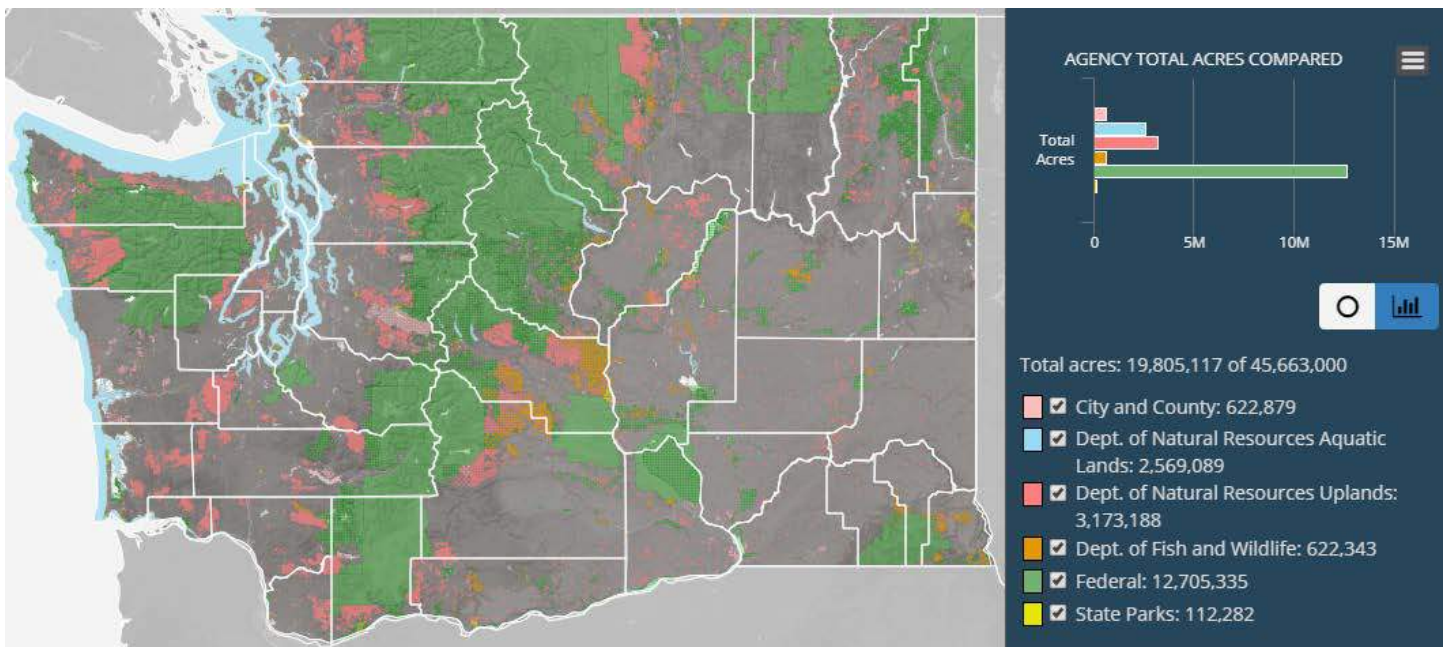
WASHINGTON STATE OUTDOOR RECREATION SYSTEM

Throughout the collaborative process, it became clear that Washington's public recreation system has implications for multiple areas of state policy. It's important to develop a deeper understanding of recreation fees associated with public lands, in order to begin to identify how changes to the recreation fee system might impact these various state policy areas. Policy areas and issues that project participants identified as connected to recreation include: public and mental health, homelessness, transportation, social justice, statewide and local economies, income inequality, climate change, youth/next generation, environmental protection, natural and cultural resource management, fiscal policy, population growth and demographic change.

To better understand these complexities and relationships, project participants worked with consultants to build a complex and dynamic systems map that informed conversations and illustrated multiple perspectives. Key drivers and perspectives identified through the mapping exercise include: outdoor recreation (on both public and private lands), land management agencies, people who recreate on public lands, Legislature/Congress, fees and recreation funding.

Land Ownership and Management

From the Columbia River to the 49th Parallel, and the Pacific Ocean to the Palouse, land ownership and management in Washington state consists of a patchwork of federal, tribal, state, local (including city, county, and public utilities), and private entities (See Figure 1). This project focuses on fees associated with recreation on state and federally-managed lands; however, it is important to hold these lands in context with local parks, private lands, tribal lands, and other areas where Washingtonians recreate, since Washingtonians may not distinguish among land managers in the places they boat, hunt, or otherwise experience the outdoors.



"Washington Public Lands Inventory" (Source: Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office)

Tribal

This region has been home to tribes since time immemorial. Today 29 federally-recognized tribes in Washington play a critical role in managing and protecting natural and cultural resources, both on and off reservation lands.

Private

According to WDFW, more than half of the lands in Washington are held in private ownership (http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/). Programs such as "Feel Free to Hunt" and "Hunt by Written Permission" provide access to hunt on private lands. Major land owners, such as Weyerhaeuser may sell a limited number of recreational permits each year (<http://www.weyerhaeuser.com/timberlands/recreational-access/northwest-region/>).

Local

Cities, counties, and public utility districts (PUDs) manage parks and provide outdoor recreation opportunities across Washington. Some counties and PUDs may require access fees or permits. For example, Daroga, Lincoln Rock, and Wenatchee Confluence State Parks require either a Chelan PUD pass (free to Chelan County PUD rate payers) or an annual Discover Pass.

Other State Agencies

State agencies such as the Washington Department of Transportation provide free public parking in proximity to state and/or federally-managed recreation areas. The Department of Licensing acts as a point of contact with the public and provides an opportunity for individuals to buy a Discover Pass at the time of vehicle registration. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and Department of Veterans' Affairs serve individuals who may be eligible for exemptions/discounted passes on state or federal lands helps limited-income seniors, foster families, and people with disabilities.

Recreation Fees in Washington State

This section provides an overview of the broad array of passes and exemption/reduced fee programs in Washington, how individuals purchase/acquire passes, pass format(s), transferability, enforcement considerations, fee rates, and fiscal impacts (both to individuals and agencies) of each pass program.

Currently, more than 20 unique recreation passes and permits are valid in Washington (including state and federal, daily and annual). Sometimes perceived as parking permits, some passes and permits grant "motor vehicle access," while others must only be displayed at authorized fee sites or in association with specific activities. Some agencies can charge access or entrance fees; others may not. This process uses the term "recreation fees" to refer to the many passes and permits, each of which has a specific meaning to the agency with which the pass or permit is affiliated.

The pass(es) that may be required depend on the agency, trailhead, season, activity, mode of access, and whether an individual qualifies for a free/reduced fee program. These passes, depending on the agency, come in the form of a rearview mirror "hang tag;" window cling; sticker; or plastic card linked to a specific individual, household, or up to two license plates. Specific activities and/or areas may require additional fees or permits (e.g. backcountry hiking permits, boat launches, hunting/fishing licenses, ORV tabs, etc.). Taken together, this amalgamation of passes and fees represents a patchwork of agency programs and policies more than a coherent system. Details on the various passes offered can be found in Appendix E.



This graphic depicts some of the complexity of the current pass system and indicates passes required on the basis of activity or beneficiary population (Y-axis) and agency managing the land (X-axis).

Outdoor recreators can purchase passes and permits through a wide variety of platforms: online, in-person (either at a park or retail vendor), at time of vehicle registration, or by pay-station; however, most points of sale sell only some state or federal passes. Not all state or federal passes are available at all points of sale. The only pass vendor that sells both state and federal passes is Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI).

Exemptions: Acquisition and Use

In Washington, nine state and federal agencies administer and recognize eleven different exemptions or reduced-fee programs. Eligibility requirements, cost to individual, benefit provided, and the process for acquiring a pass or accessing a program varies by agency and reduced-fee program. Some programs require an individual to submit proof of eligibility in advance of recreating (i.e. submit required documents proving service-related disability to receive disabled veterans lifetime pass), while others just require proof of eligibility to be shown upon entering the recreation site (i.e. display handicap placard). Detailed information on pass administration and eligibility can be found in the Holistic Look document available on the Center's website or Appendix E.

Pass Format and Transferability

Frequently-cited frustrations with the current fee system center around the usability of different passes and the inconsistency between the formats and transferability of different passes. This section provides an overview of pass formats and transferability along with considerations for both enforcement and mode of arriving at a trailhead.

Pass Format	Pass Transferability		
	People	Personal Vehicle	Household
Hangtag		Annual Discover Pass (up to 2 license plates) Annual/Daily Northwest Forest Pass (up to 2 license plates) Vehicle Access Pass (up to 2 license plates)	(as of 2017) Northwest Forest Pass
Plastic Card	Interagency Passes Limited-Income Senior Disabled Veteran Disability		
Sticker		Sno-Park Permit Special Groomed Sticker (one vehicle only)	
Window Cling		Northwest Forest Pass (only for open top vehicle and motorcycle, with valid NW Forest Pass) Natural Investment Permit (not associated with license plate)	
No Pass	Foster Family Camping Benefit (show care provider certification) Disability Pass (if use 1- or 5-year disability placard)		

The Interagency Pass provides signature lines for two individuals who are both considered pass holders, admitting the pass holder and up to 3 additional persons at per-person fee sites. However, Interagency Pass

exemption/reduced fee programs (such as the Access or Senior Pass) are associated with a single person and do not provide two signature lines, though they can still admit the pass holder and up to 3 additional persons at per-person fee sites.

Both the Discover Pass and the Northwest Forest Pass are connected to vehicles, provide two spaces for license plate numbers, and are only valid when displayed in either of those two vehicles. However, like the Interagency Pass, all Washington State Park exempt/reduced-fee programs are associated with the individual receiving the exemption/reduced fee benefit, not vehicles.

Additional considerations of motor vehicle based passes (such as both the Discover Pass and Northwest Forest Pass) include the enforcement of such passes, which is done on-site in parking lots at sites that do not have entrance fees. The vast majority of state recreation areas are either unstaffed on a regular basis or do not have a staffed entry. Thus, fee collection and enforcement in state recreation areas is most practical with motor vehicles as the basis for passes. Additionally, the justification for having fees/passes associated with vehicles comes in part from the significant cost to agencies of maintaining roads, parking lots and other support facilities and the reality that almost all visitors come to state facilities by private motor vehicle

State Agency Fiscal Health

In recent decades, state agencies and the Legislature have instituted various user-based fees to offset decreases in funding allocations while striving to manage trails and other facilities that face pressure from increasing participation in outdoor recreation. This section provides an overview of how state agencies were historically funded and how funding has evolved, including the emergence of user-based fees and passes along with anticipated future funding levels. Staff from the state agencies provided the budgets and pass/fee revenue numbers listed below. For mission and vision of all state and federal land management agencies, see Appendix F.



Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

\$174 million
2015-17 Total Operating Budget

- State Parks spends \$169 million biannually on recreation (excluding boating safety). In the last decade, the agency went from approximately 80% tax-funded to 20% tax-funded. Discover Pass revenue plays an important role in offsetting decreased State General Fund allocations.
- Additional funding sources include the litter tax (\$10 million, set to go away at the end of the biennium) and a \$5 opt-out donation program (at time of vehicle registration), which generates approximately \$12 million per biennium.
- Winter recreation programs are self-funded—the permit revenue generated in one fiscal year funds grooming and operations for the next year. The non-motorized Sno-Park Permits generated approximately \$1 million in FY17. Motorized recreation generated about \$2.5 million (through registration of snowmobiles and fuel tax).
- Despite new and diverse funding sources, State Parks currently faces an approximately \$500 million deficiency in building-related maintenance and upkeep.



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

\$415.6 million

2015-17 Total Operating Budget

- WDFW receives \$3 million from Discover Pass revenue for operations and maintenance to offset the loss of State General Funds and reduction of state wildlife funds.
- The Lands Division total operating budget was is \$33.9 million/year. Approximately \$2.8 million (eight percent) of this comes from the Discover Pass. Discover Pass revenue funds maintenance of water access sites and supports more "primitive sites."
- While hunting and fishing license sales comprise a significant portion of WDFW's recreation budget, fewer licenses are being purchased than in the past and costs (for basic operations and maintenance, mitigating climate change, protecting/restoring the ecosystem) are increasing.



Washington Department of Natural Resources

\$451 million

2015-17 Total Operating Budget

- Approximately \$3.5 million of Discover Pass revenue was distributed to DNR in 2015-17 biennium.
- Discover Pass revenue helps cover costs for law enforcement services, agency overhead, interagency payments (for administration of Discover Pass program), as well as support for maintenance, operations, development, and education through the Recreation Program.
- The Recreation Program 2015-2017 Biennium total Operating Budget was \$8,037,400 with the Discover Pass making up ~28% of the operating revenue.
- The Recreation Program does not receive State General Fund support but does receive an allocation of the ORV and Nonhighway and Offroad Vehicle accounts.
- The program pursues competitive grant funds through NOVA and RTP to compensate for resulting shortfalls in staffing and service requirements.

Pass/Fee Revenue in Washington State

Discover Pass

revenue is dispersed by State Parks from the Recreation Access Pass Account (RAPA) to WDFW and DNR on a monthly basis..

- Revenue (FY16, from sale of 605,296 annual and 322,542 daily passes, from infractions \$513,819):\$21,898,126

Interagency Pass

This series of federal passes is sold by vendors (such as REI and Discover your Northwest) across the country, so it is difficult to ascertain how many passes are purchased and used by Washington residents. Pass revenue, less administration of pass sales, is dispersed by NPS among the agencies. Agency heads have discretion to shape this formula and will use a forthcoming University of Montana survey to inform revenue sharing. The survey will provide information on how often and where pass holders recreate. T

The numbers below reflect pass sales at and entrance fees for sites in Washington.

National Park Service (Washington sites, FY16)

- Entrance Fee Revenue (from 1-7 day passes): \$5,123,160
- Interagency Annual Pass (22,044 @ \$80/pass): \$1,763,520
- Interagency Senior Pass (20,002 @ \$10/pass): \$207,020
- Site specific annual passes: \$616,336

Bureau of Land Management (Washington sites, FY16, numbers were rounded)

- Standard Amenity Fees: \$82,000, includes \$1000 from site-specific annual pass
- Interagency Annual and Senior Pass: \$3,000

US Fish & Wildlife Service (Washington sites, FY16)

- Daily/annual entrance fees (includes site specific fees): \$286,926

US Forest Service (Washington State National Forests, FY16)

- Total recreation budget for Washington National Forests: \$9,858,926
- Total fee revenue (includes fee tubes and all daily and annual passes, excludes campgrounds): \$1,759,948

Fiscal Impacts of Recreation Fees and Exempt or Reduced-Fee Programs

The following section outlines the estimated fiscal impacts to State Parks for administering required exempt/reduced fee programs. These estimates only consider existing exemptions at State Parks, but WDFW also provides discounted hunting and fishing licenses for qualifying individuals. The following numbers are estimates (beneficiary group participation is not closely tracked), so State Parks extrapolates based on general population usage rates. In 2017 a 16% participation rate is assumed, except for the Foster Home Camping Pass which has an estimated participation rate of 24%. Table 1 below shows fiscal impacts for each program, differentiating between direct costs and camping subsidy costs for 2017.

The estimates in this section, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from financial reporting conducted by State Parks & Recreation Commission.

Disability Pass

State Parks calculates the participation rate for this exemption program by taking the total number of permanent disability permits awarded (442,189) and subtracting Disabled Veterans qualifiers which leaves 350,457 potential beneficiaries. Applying the 2017 participation estimate gives a total of 56,073 participants in the Disability Exemption program.

Disabled Veterans Lifetime Pass

In 2017, an estimated 91,711 veterans have a service-related disability rating of 30% or greater (Audette & Stenovec, 2017). With 2017 participation estimates applied to this population, a total of 18,565 are assumed to participate.

Limited-Income Senior Pass

In 2017, the estimated population of limited-income senior households in Washington was 230,530. State Parks extrapolates 36,885 households participated.

Foster Home Camping Pass

In 2017, the estimated population of foster care households in Washington was 1,884 and State Parks estimates that approximately 452 households used this benefit.

Table 2. Financial data for exemption groups, provided by State Parks 2017.

Program	Camping Subsidy Cost Estimate	Lost Revenue Cost Estimate	Total Direct Cost
Disability	\$513,807	\$1,682,194	\$2,196,000
Disabled Veterans	\$2,369,818	\$440,314	\$2,810,132
Low-Income Seniors	\$89,853	\$1,106,543	\$1,196,395
Foster Families	\$145,635	\$13,565	\$159,199
TOTALS	\$3,119,113	\$3,242,616	\$6,361,726

Volunteers (Complimentary Discover Pass)

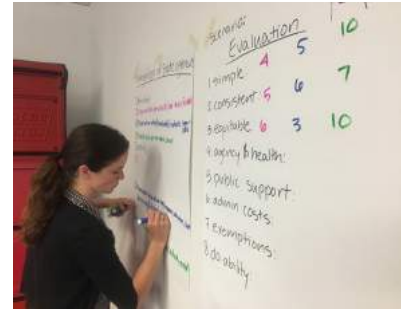
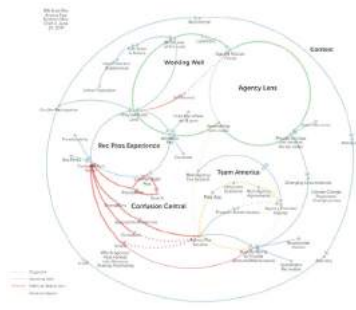
All Washington residents may participate in the Discover Pass Volunteer Program, in which volunteers earn a Discover Pass by participating in eligible projects. The fiscal analysis for SB 5200, which passed in the 2017 Legislature, reports an average of 423 Discover Passes issued per year under this program (across five years of data). With married couples qualifying, an estimated 63 additional passes are issued annually, for an estimated total of 486 households receiving the Pass. Volunteer program cost data is based on the five-year average number of passes issued each year from SB5200 (2017) fiscal note (486 passes), multiplied by the Discover Pass base price (\$30) to arrive at the estimated total direct cost of \$14,580.

State and Federal Nexus – Role of U.S. Congress and State Legislature

A central focus of the proviso initiating this process, and of respondents to the statewide survey, is the exploration of opportunities to simplify the pass system via the creation of some means for a single pass to work on both state and federal recreation lands in Washington. The U.S. Congress and the Washington State Legislature play significant roles as the funders of public land management agencies and authorizers of pass/permit fee collection, including exempt/reduced fee programs. A regional pass valid on both state and federal recreation lands can be developed by the regional federal offices, with support from Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. A nationwide state/federal pass requires Congressional authorization. Coordination among state and federal agencies requires support from the state Legislature and regional or national offices of the Federal agencies.

3. Leadership Team Key Analysis & Considerations

WASHINGTON RECREATION FEES LEADERSHIP TEAM: KEY ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATIONS



Previous Efforts and Related Studies

Outdoor recreation and use of 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, conducted, and convened to help better understand the role and shape the future of recreation and use of public lands in the state. The sections below describe recent efforts that both catalyzed this process and helped inform the deliberations of the participants.

State of State Parks 2012

The "State of State Parks 2012" report provided by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission to the Office of Financial Management describes "painful" changes taken to control costs (including sweeping reductions to total numbers of permanent full-time staff by one-third). The Discover Pass, created in 2011 to enable State Parks to continue funding their operations, did not meet desired revenue projections, initially, falling short by more than 50%.

The proviso authorizing this report asked State Parks to detail progress towards a self-supported system. State Parks investigated such a financial model and determined it to be both unsustainable and undesirable by State Parks. State Parks posited that the "right mix" of funding from pass sales and the State General Fund should be found in order to better align with the agency's statutory obligations. The report indicated that a return to previous levels of state tax-financing was not realistic, but instead recommended a "combination of user fees, ongoing State General Fund support and new revenue-generating activities... outlined in a comprehensive agency Transformation Strategy" (Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, 2012). Public input informed the development of this strategy which included (in addition to reorganization efforts underway at time of publication); developing capacity for data-driven analysis of Parks' business model, methods to increase revenue from existing channels, appropriate role for State General Fund contributions, and defining a purpose-driven fee structure.

(More information on State Park's planning and strategy can be found at: <http://parks.state.wa.us/152/Strategic-Planning>).

2013 Legislative Report

In 2013, all state land-management agencies collaborated to report on opportunities for consistency across recreational access policies in Washington. It was borne out of the recognition that the nascent Discover Pass program was tied to ‘inconsistencies in recreational access policies, some of which are confusing for the public’ (Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, & Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2013, p. 1). However, the report also recognized the successes of the then-young Discover Pass program, including the essential role it plays in funding state land management.

The 2013 Legislative report focused on consistency and simplicity, identifying progress made in the first few years of the Discover Pass, making recommendations as well as highlighting obstacles. Progress made included a number of marketing and distribution improvements: creating a Discover Pass logo and separate website, organization of teams to provide customer support, development of Discover Pass signs, customer retention strategies, and automated ticket machines at high-use sites. The 2013 report also proposed a pass redesign of the pass with emphasizing improved durability and distinctiveness in comparison to other state access passes (i.e. WDFW’s Vehicle Access Pass).

The agencies also developed several options for revising the administration of exemption and reduced-fee programs including those serving limited-income seniors, individuals with disabilities, veterans with 30% service-related disability, and foster families. Additional revision options were considered regarding boat launching, Sno-Parks, camping, free-entry days, and coordination of Discover Pass with the Vehicle Access Pass.

Blue Ribbon Parks and Outdoor Recreation Task Force

In 2014, Governor Jay Inslee signed Executive Order 14-01 to establish “a Blue Ribbon Task Force to develop a transformation strategy for outdoor recreation in Washington State”. The order called for development of an action plan to address five key dimensions:

1. Support and expand outdoor recreation in the form of jobs, businesses, and tourism across the state,
2. promote and expand fishing and hunting to support local economies,
3. increase environmental awareness via promotion of outdoor experiences,
4. support talent acquisition and retention among state businesses and,
5. establish long-term funding sources for State Parks and other state land-management agencies.

The Task Force concluded work December 31, 2014 with several key recommended near-term actions and longer-term objectives. Actions included changes to funding channels, e.g. removing the 23-cent cap on gas taxes for off-road recreation, establishing new taxes on bottle water, and travel trailers, and directing revenue from watercraft excise taxes to recreation. The Task Force also called for improvements to the Discover Pass until alternate funding could be identified and the pass could be eliminated. Other desired actions included diversifying appointees to state recreation boards, designation of outdoor recreation as a specific industry with accompanying sector lead (to grow the economic contributions of outdoor recreation) and creating an outdoor recreation coordinating council. Long-term objectives include coordinating the promotion of outdoor recreation available (to attract more visitors from further afield), assisting smaller towns with all phases of developing their outdoor recreation resources and increased educational around recreation as a contributor to Washington’s economy (Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, 2016).

In September 2016, Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) revisited the status of these action items. Most of the action items were completed or ongoing at that time. Actions to incorporate outdoor recreation into K-12 core curriculum remains outstanding, but several separate efforts are underway (*Additional information and associated reports from the Blue Ribbon Task Force can be found at <http://www.rco.wa.gov/boards/TaskForce.shtml>*).

2017 Resident Survey SCORP

This survey (at the direction of RCO) was conducted to “assess the demand for outdoor recreation in preparation for the state comprehensive outdoor recreation plan” (Jostad, Schultz, & Chase, 2017, p. 2). The survey was completed by 5,945 individuals taken from a random, state-wide sample. The survey report included key findings on participation rates for specific activities, user days, locations of participation, satisfaction with facilities and opportunities, and future demand, including constraints to recreating.

A total of 27% indicated constraints to participation. The most common complaints related to restroom facilities and lack of opportunities within their communities. Other facility-specific concerns expressed were the associated costs, boat launch conditions, bike trails, general undesirable conditions, campground availability, access for persons with disabilities, lack of maintenance, pool availability and general shortage of facilities. Where opportunities were concerned, “access and cost were by far the leading issues” (Jostad et al., 2017, p. 55). This includes transportation, understanding public-private jurisdictions, and concern about rising costs.

Leadership Team Research Products & Key Analysis

The Leadership Team directed the work groups to build a common information base by gathering existing resources and commissioning new research efforts, in order to develop informed options and recommendations. The information presented in this section includes the following research products:

- Survey of Washington residents by WSU’s Division of Governmental Studies and Services to understand perspectives of the current fee system, barriers to recreating on public lands, and support for options under consideration by the Leadership Team.
- Case study analysis of how other states approach recreation fees and funding of public lands.
- Comprehensive analysis of exemptions and discounted passes, including analysis across all 50 states.
- Evaluation tool providing a framework for analyzing existing and proposed exemptions/ discounted passes (See Appendix G. for criteria).

These products can be found at the Ruckelshaus Center’s website: <http://ruckelshauscenter.wsu.edu/> or in the Appendices of the full report.

Paying for Recreation: User-Based Fees

The average **minimum** cost of an annual pass is \$47.50. Washington, at \$30, falls below the national average, and well below the mode of \$50. The range among states is from \$10 to \$100.

The average **maximum** cost of an annual pass is \$76.44 (\$58.71, omitting New York). Washington, again at \$30, falls below the national average, and well below the mode of \$50. Washington also sits at the lower end of the national price range (from \$10 to \$750). Though this range may seem extreme, it is skewed by New York charging a maximum amount of \$750 for a lifetime pass. The next highest amount is \$195. Only eight states charge more than \$100 at maximum.

Of the 37 states offering daily passes Washington has the second highest **minimum** price, charging \$10 per day. Only Massachusetts is higher at \$12 per day. The minimum national average cost between the 37 states offering daily passes is \$5.04, and the mode is \$5, with a range from \$2 to \$12.

The average price for the **maximum** cost of a daily pass is \$8.72. There are 12 states that charge \$10 or higher, including Washington. However, Washington is in the bottom third of the range that extends from \$4 to \$30. The mode of maximum cost is again \$5.

Data collected by State Parks, analyzed by Division of Governmental Studies and Services.

Who Should Pay for Public lands?

From the Situation Assessment (2017, p. 17)

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.

...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.

Pass Format and Transferability

Leadership Team Considerations:

- Potential need for new capital investments, (i.e. pass printers) for example, if Discover Pass is modified to accommodate endorsements or Interagency Pass or becomes a sticker. Retaining the hang tag would build on existing infrastructure investments.
- Current hangtag is not practical for open-top vehicles, or motorcycles due to potential theft or ability to attach securely. Developing a sticker format for these vehicles could serve as a pilot for offering a sticker option for all vehicles.
- **Window cling or sticker:**
 - Window cling or sticker would likely not be stolen if printed with a car's corresponding license plate number (numerous other states use a similar format).
 - **Pricing:** USFS offers a window cling at no cost to people who provide proof of registration (of an eligible vehicle) and proof of purchase of a NW Forest Pass.
- **Single-vehicle pass option:** Builds on the branding and awareness of the Discover Pass program, but eliminates the "I forgot my pass in the other car" frustration.
- According to Department of Licensing (DOL): different registration tabs would be difficult to implement and may be challenging for law enforcement. There is space available for a sticker on the front license plate of vehicles registered in Washington (front plates are mandatory), but law enforcement should be engaged in the development of such a format to ensure that pass placement does not interfere with the view or purpose of front license plates. Orders would need to be fulfilled by a third-party vendor or state land management agency. DOL can be a point of contact with public, but not tasked with fulfillment.

Relevant Survey Findings:

All respondents broadly supported the hangtag option, with window stickers preferred second.

Why Tie Funding for Public Lands to Motor Vehicles?

- Many existing passes are vehicle based;
- An overwhelming majority of visitors arrive by motor vehicle;
- Maintenance of trailhead/parking lot amenities represent a significant cost to the agencies;
- Pass associated with a vehicle is more easily enforceable—a ranger can check vehicles in the parking lot for a pass.

Participants acknowledged that a vehicle-based pass system can be circumvented by parking elsewhere or using an alternative mode of transportation to the trailhead; however, person or activity based fees create new challenges.

- A per-person based pass works at lands/sites with staffed entrance stations, but would be difficult and expensive for agencies to enforce at all points of access. Additionally, per-person fees may be more expensive for families. And;

- The Leadership Team expressed concern that further developing an activity-based (e.g. Sno-Park Permits & Natural Investment Permits) pass system would be seen as quantifying the “damage” a hiker or mountain biker inflicts on the land and create conflict between user types. Activity-based fees may also reduce opportunities to bundle and simplify the number of passes required to recreate on public lands.

Case Study: Colorado Parks and Wildlife manages all state lands open for recreation. Inside windshield pass required (\$7/day or \$70/annual). Household may purchase additional vehicle passes for \$35/vehicle.

Pricing: Cost of Passes to the Public

Leadership Team Considerations:

- Currently, the base price of Discover Pass is \$30, but transaction fees make the actual cost to purchaser vary from \$30, \$32, or \$35.
- Administrative costs for selling passes at State Parks and Department of Licensing are borne by the agencies.
- **Analysis from WDFW:** Assuming current annual pass purchasing levels (point of sale, number sold), a \$35 cost to users at all points of sale would generate an additional \$1.9 million/ year and help to offset the cost of sales/fulfillment.
- **Administration:** It is most efficient for agencies when individuals buy annual passes in advance. It is labor-intensive for State Parks staff to sell annual or one-day passes on site, and even more so to offer the ability to apply one-day pass purchase towards an annual pass.
- Fiscal analysis should consider the relationship between price and recommendations for simplifying and bundling state passes (i.e. the price of a Discover Pass could be lower than the current \$30-35 range and still maintain or increase revenue, if required on more lands or in association with more activities (such as camping at State Parks or hunting at WDFW managed lands) or if a single-vehicle pass would increase participation). Single-vehicle pricing analysis should begin in the \$15-20 range.
- **Inflation:** Currently the Office of Financial Management (OFM) is directed to inform the Legislature every four years of an adjusted price accounting for inflation, but the legislature is not required to act. Without price elasticity data, the agencies and OFM have been reluctant to submit for inflation adjustments.

Relevant Survey Findings:

Respondents who indicated they purchased a Discover Pass in the past 12 months indicated the likelihood of purchasing a pass at \$5 increments ranging from \$35-55. The majority of random residents (77.3%) and all survey respondents (80.1%) indicated they would definitely purchase a pass at \$35, but that percentage dramatically decreases at \$40 (38% and 38%, respectively). (p 13 of survey report). This indicates that care should be taken and additional analysis conducted prior to any price change.

Purchasing

- Not all passes are available at all points of sale. Congress is considering a bill that would allow federal agencies to sell state passes. WDFW could sell federal passes online (at least non-discounted passes), but in-person sales would be at the discretion of the vendor.

Access to Information

Principle: Individuals shouldn't need to know the agency that manages the recreation area to plan a trip.

Leadership Team Considerations:

- www.recreation.gov is a resource for passes, permits, fees relating to 60,000 sites across 12 agencies nationwide. A major user interface upgrade will roll out shortly, and there may be opportunities for state and local entities to partner.

Elements of a Common Information Portal (includes information on state and federal lands):

- Overview of all state and federal passes valid in Washington;
- Why passes are needed, how resulting revenue is used;
- Information on the exemption/discounted pass programs, how to use/acquire those benefits, and where they are valid;
- Opportunities for individuals to easily identify what pass is needed where, and links to purchase required pass;
- Links to resources with more information;
- Help the public make informed decisions about what pass to purchase (daily vs. annual; Northwest Forest vs. Interagency vs. site-specific National Park Pass.
- Information for people with disabilities, such as accessibility of facilities, taking service animals, using/accessing passes.

Relevant Survey Findings:

Majority of pass purchasers (53.9%) from random statewide survey indicated *creating a single website where I can plan trips and purchase any passes I need is very important consideration for improving fee system.*

Single Pass for State and Federal Lands

Key Analysis From Situation Assessment: Many interviewees thought that one pass would eliminate uncertainty regarding what pass was needed where, but expressed concern that price could be prohibitive – and suggested that a more expensive state/federal-pass option may need to be in addition to, rather than in place of, less expensive existing passes. Some expressed concern that a state/federal pass might not necessarily address need to visit multiple agency websites to plan a trip or fully learn about recreation opportunities within a region.

Federal Authorization: Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA)

This legislation provides authority for federal agencies to collect fees under specific circumstances and provides a framework for revenue sharing and interagency collaboration. FLREA first granted federal agencies the ability to collect fees in fiscal year 2005, with a sunset date in 2015. Congress has extended FLREA through September 30, 2019 (US Code, Title 16, chapter 87, 6802). FLREA prohibits fee collection at USFS, BLM, and BOR for general access, use of overlooks, or travel through federal lands for those not using any developed facilities. The National Park Service collects entry fees for general access and services at parks designated as fee collecting parks. Fee collecting parks have a webpage explaining the user fees collected at each site.

Revenue Sharing

FLREA directs the US Secretary of the Treasury to “establish a special account in the Treasury for each

Federal land management agency” and provides a framework for distributing fees (both inter and intra-agency). A percentage of agency and site-specific fees benefit local offices and programs, with the balance going to regional and national offices.

With respect to the national, Interagency Pass programs, FLREA directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to:

“[I]ssue guidelines[...] which shall include agreement on price, the distribution of revenues between the Federal land management agencies, the sharing of costs, benefits provided, marketing and design, adequate documentation for age and disability discounts under subsection (b), and the issuance of that recreation pass to volunteers. The Secretaries shall take into consideration all relevant visitor and sales data available in establishing the guidelines.” (US Code, Title 16, chapter 87, 6802)

Interagency Collaboration & Fee Collection

Excerpt:

(d) REGIONAL MULTIENTITY PASSES

(1) PASSES AUTHORIZED

The Secretary may establish and charge a fee for a regional multientity pass that will be accepted by one or more Federal land management agencies or by one or more governmental or nongovernmental entities for a specified period not to exceed 12 months. To include a Federal land management agency or governmental or nongovernmental entity over which the Secretary does not have jurisdiction, the Secretary shall obtain the consent of the head of such agency or entity.

(2) REGIONAL MULTIENTITY PASS AGREEMENT

In order to establish a regional multientity pass under this subsection, the Secretary shall enter into a regional multientity pass agreement with all the participating agencies or entities on price, the distribution of revenues between participating agencies or entities, the sharing of costs, benefits provided, marketing and design, and the issuance of the pass to volunteers. The Secretary shall take into consideration all relevant visitor and sales data available when entering into this agreement.

Additional Takeaways

- Washington residents who visit federal lands out of state may still need to acquire a valid federal pass.
- Opportunities/challenges for allocating and dispersing revenue, whether a state “buyout” (Washington pays participating federal agencies an agreed-upon amount for recognizing the Discover Pass) or reciprocity (whoever sells the pass, keeps the money): difficult to quantify current visitation at sites or lands that don’t have a staffed entrance; therefore, challenging to make accurate projections of fiscal impact and correlations between pass/fee revenue and visitation.
- Washington and Oregon used to have a state/federal pass option, which consisted of a state hangtag and the Interagency Pass (approximately 7,000 passes sold in 6 years). Re-creating this combined Washington/Oregon Pass would not necessarily require federal approval, but would

Relevant Survey Findings:

Of all survey respondents, 91.2% of respondents are either somewhat or very interested in a single pass or permit that gives access to all state and federal managed outdoor recreation lands in Washington state. Similarly, 85.8% of all survey respondents are either somewhat or very interested in a single pass or permit that gives access to all state managed outdoor recreation lands and all National Forests in Washington state.

require coordination with Oregon, if a two-state pass option is pursued. Challenges for the state hangtag holding federal pass: variations in transferability, expiration date, and lack of opportunities to buy state and federal pass at the same location.

- **Pass Product:** Administrative burden for local federal sites to sell/administer another product, whether a new pass or the Discover Pass.
- HR 3400 is a bill currently under consideration in Congress that would give federal agencies the authority and the flexibility to sell state passes (does not provide authority to combine passes).
- Not all federal recreation fees are solely associated with a personal vehicle.

Fee-Free Days

Key Analysis

- Federal agencies do not have a policy of consistent fee-free days across all agencies in the Interagency Pass program; instead, fee-free days recognize days of historic importance to their respective agency (number of free days ranges from 10-1).
- Nationally, 16 State Parks systems (or their equivalents) have free days, averaging 1-2 days per year.
- Sno-Parks don't offer fee-free days.
- Currently, State Parks is directed to consider fee-free days provided by federal agencies and authorize "up to 12" free days.

Leadership Team Considerations:

- Fee-free days provide an opportunity to promote recreation on Washington's public lands.

Relevant Survey Findings:

When asked to indicate why they did not purchase a recreation pass in the past 12 months, only 3.7% of non-pass purchasing survey respondents (95 individuals) indicated that they "primarily visit State Parks, National Parks, etc on free days."

Simplicity on State Recreation Lands

Key Analysis

- Some of the passes below grant motor vehicle access, others provide access and use of amenities (and the fees support the maintenance and operations of those amenities).
- Participants suggested that changes to passes and programs should also consider the formula for sharing Discover Pass revenue, agency fiscal health, and the cost to users (including the price of the Discover Pass and activity specific fees). Requiring the Discover Pass in association with more activities could lower the price for the public.
- Current distribution of Discover Pass revenue reflects the reduction in State General Fund support at the time of pass inception more closely than visitor use patterns, operational costs or program requirements.

Relevant Survey Findings:

Majority of pass purchasers (63.6%) indicated that "reducing the number of permits/passes required" was very important in improving the system.

Eastern Washington respondents are significantly more supportive of passes that combine launch fees and winter recreation with the Discover Pass.

Watercraft Launch Sites

The annual Natural Investment Permit (NIP) or Discover Pass/daily launch fee combination is required at Watercraft Launch sites managed by State Parks. In FY13, the NIP daily/annual launch fees generated \$420,000. Primitive launch sites managed by DNR require users to display a Discover Pass. AT WDFW managed lands, the Discover Pass or the VAP is required.

Winter Recreation

Most winter recreation sites (at USFS managed lands) require only a seasonal Sno-Park Permit, some additionally require Special Groomed Sticker for non-motorized recreation. A few winter recreation sites at state managed lands currently require daily/annual Discover Pass and Special Groomed Sticker OR a seasonal Sno-Park Permit. The winter recreation program is currently a self-funded program.

Hunting and Fishing

The Vehicle Access Pass (VAP) is currently provided with the purchase of most hunting/fishing license through WDFW. Requiring the Discover Pass—even if available at a discount—may be perceived as a fee increase by those who hunt or fish on WDFW lands. WDFW receives federal match dollars for sales of hunting and fishing licenses, which can be 2-3 times the actual price to user. Thus, reducing the cost of a hunting/fishing license that includes a Discover Pass would reduce the level of federal funding WDFW receives. Including a Discover Pass with the purchase of a hunting/fishing license (without raising license fees) might affect the federal dollar match that WDFW receives for license sales. Providing a reduced cost Discover Pass for one activity, might meet resistance from other activity groups.

Camping

Currently, a Discover Pass is required for primitive camping at DNR and WDFW managed sites, but not valid for overnight vehicle access at State Parks campgrounds (valid camping receipt provides day access during period of visitation).

\$5 Donation Program (State Parks)

Key Analysis

- Donation program currently generates \$14 million per biennium for State Parks.

Dual-Registered ORVs

Key Analysis

- Currently both the tow-vehicle and vehicle used on the trail must have (and display) separate Discover Passes.

- Dual registration ORV license is not required for recreation on state managed lands, but is required on federal lands. ORV licenses help support the development and maintenance of off-highway motorized recreation areas.

Approaches to Exemptions

Key Analysis

- Currently, some exemption programs waive transaction fees and others do not, some grant passes and other do not, and benefits are only valid at lands managed by State Parks. Individuals who recreate on DNR or WDFW lands may still need to purchase a Discover Pass.
- The evaluation tool currently assesses financial cost of existing exemptions valid at State Parks. Further analysis is required to calculate financial impact to agencies for exemptions to be extended to DNR and WDFW and the hunting/fishing discounts at WDFW.
- Currently, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) does not provide information on discounts/exemptions at public lands to potential beneficiaries. There is an opportunity for land management agencies to partner with DSHS to determine eligibility; however, this could lead to increased use of benefits (see considerations under agency fiscal health for discussion on reimbursements for exemption programs).
- **Volunteer Pass Program:** this is not an exemption, but a way of earning a Discover Pass. Agencies use volunteer hours as in-kind matches for Recreation Conservation Office grants. Many seniors take advantage of this program, but there are opportunities to increase participation among seniors and people with disabilities.

Approaches to Equity

Key Analysis

- Fees may be a financial barrier for some to use and access public lands, but may not necessarily be the only barrier. Additional barriers identified by the work group, situation assessment interviewees, and survey respondents include: transportation, usability of facilities, and accessibility of information.

Role of State General Fund

Key Analysis

- Agencies provide services that benefit the state, but are unrelated to visitor use (natural and cultural resource stewardship), or not fully compensable (discounts and exemptions and other required free services, e.g., tribal access, public school access, other government access).
- Requirements of government processes not appropriately compensable by only visitors (e.g., public involvement in decision making, general government functions).
- Legislature directed State Parks to become self-funded agency (currently receives approximately 20% of annual budget from the State General Fund; historically received approximately 80%). Creation of user fees has filled some of the agency funding gap, but not all. Levels of public funding continue to decline, in part, due to the increased revenue generated by fees.
- **From the Situation Assessment:** In light of current funding challenges--individuals who have an ability to pay, are willing to pay--but they still recognize public lands as a public benefit that should be supported by the State General Fund.



4. Leadership Team Packaged Options

WASHINGTON RECREATION FEES LEADERSHIP TEAM: PACKAGED OPTIONS

In addition to a number of options considered but not recommended (see later in this report), the Work Groups developed, and the Leadership Team refined three comprehensive packages with coherent narratives that address the proviso elements and guiding principles of simplicity, consistency, equity, and agency fiscal health. The Leadership Team pursued this approach to developing options and recommendations in recognition of the interconnectedness of components of potential recommendations, and to tell the story of how each suite of recommendations addresses the tenets of the proviso and the guiding principles.

This section presents an overview for each package and presents components to meet the proviso principles. The three packages are:

- **Pass-Free Access;**
- **Two-Vehicle Pass System - Building on Success; and**
- **One-Vehicle Pass System - Reduced Fees.**

Components of each package may address more than one guiding principle, but are organized by proviso element and the information requested by the Legislature.

Each element includes one or more of the following actions required for implementation (or notes where more information required):



Administrative/Programmatic Change



Legislative Authorization



Federal Authorization or Coordination



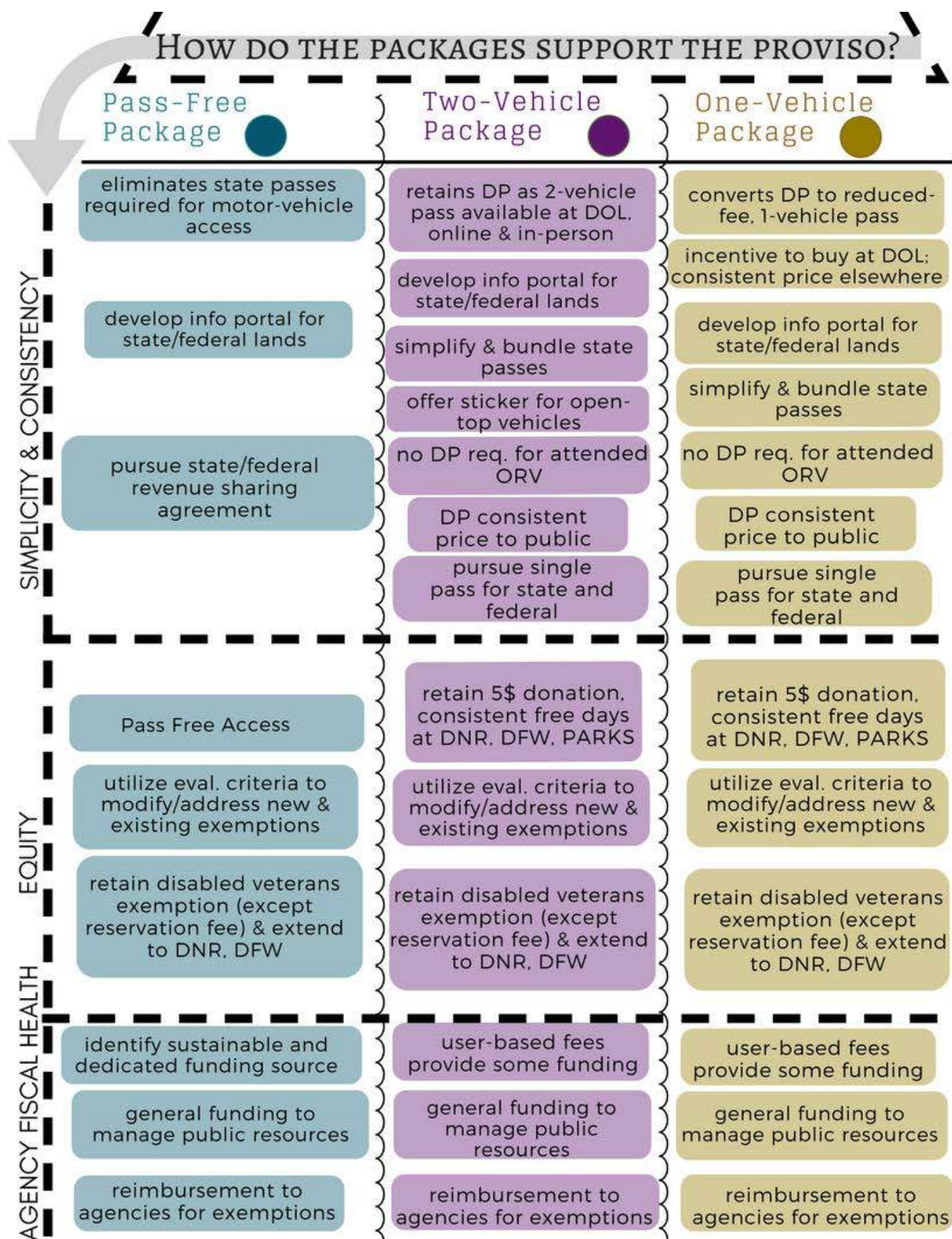
Requires New Resources



Potential to Generate New Funding

Leadership Team Assumptions

- Fees for backcountry permits, hunting and fishing licenses, campgrounds, ORV tabs, and other special use permits/passes remain.
- Agencies will continue to receive funding through broad public sources to:
 - Maintain and enhance usability of facilities;
 - Offset the costs of exemption/discount programs; and
 - Steward natural, cultural, historic, and other public resources.



Pass-Free Access Package

This is the preferred recommendation of the voting members of the Leadership Team, concluding that it is the best fit with the guiding principles/parameters of the proviso. This package replaces the Discover Pass and other state recreation passes with a source of broad-based public funding, resulting in the simplest, most consistent and equitable fee system and stable funding for land management agencies. Broad-based public funding reduces the need for exemptions and discounted passes. The funding source given the most consideration was a mandatory public land management fee at the time of vehicle registration; however, the Leadership Team did not prescribe this source and was open to other funding methods. With more Washingtonians supporting public land management, further fiscal analysis on a registration fee should begin in the \$7-15 per vehicle range. Under this package, agency budgets should still include allocations from the State General Fund.

HOW THIS PACKAGE ADDRESSES PROVISO ELEMENTS: *Simplicity and Consistency*

Format, Pricing, and Purchasing User-based fees on state lands no longer required for Washington residents. Further analysis required to determine cost/benefit of requiring passes for out-of-state residents.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization

Access To and Usability Of Information: Encourage/support state agencies (DNR, WDFW, and State Parks) to coordinate with federal agencies and other appropriate entities to develop common information portal.

Even if state and potentially federal passes are no longer required in Washington, education and marketing will be key to a successful transition to a new system, provide information for using public lands and planning trips (especially information for people with disabilities), and develop awareness of how public lands are funded.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Federal
Authorization



Requires New
Resources

State/Federal Fee Coordination: Encourage/support state agencies (State Parks, DNR, WDFW) to engage with federal agencies (at least USFS, but explore opportunities with other federal agencies) to develop a revenue sharing agreement.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Federal
Authorization



Requires New
Resources



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

\$5 Donation at Vehicle Registration: Fiscal analysis should consider whether the existing opt-out donation made to State Parks at the time of vehicle registration would be eliminated or become an opt-in program with revenue shared across the three state land management agencies.

Additional considerations identified by the Leadership Team:

- Depending on the funding mechanism and amount of revenue generated, the Leadership Team hopes that the opt-out donation could be eliminated while keeping State Parks whole.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

Equity

Approach to Exemptions/Discounted Passes:

- Develop and adopt statutory language requiring agencies and the Legislature to apply principles of the the fiscal and social impact evaluation criteria/tool to existing and proposed exemptions.
- Retain exemptions for disabled veterans, except reservation transaction exemption, and extend free day-use access to DNR and WDFW.
- Use the fiscal and social impact evaluation criteria/tool and exemptions as a way to facilitate broader equity in access to public lands.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Requires New
Resources

Agency Fiscal Health

Reimburse Agencies to Implement Exemptions/Discount Programs: Agencies provide biennial estimates of cost to implement exemption programs to Office of Financial Management and Legislature, receiving reimbursement to the Recreation Access Pass Account (account that receives all Discover Pass Revenue).

Identify Sustainable and Dedicated Funding Sources to Replace Current and Projected User-Based Fee Revenue: The main source considered, but not prescribed, by the Leadership Team was a public land management fee at time of vehicle registration. The Leadership Team was open to other funding methods.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

Two-Vehicle Pass System, Building on Success Package

This package is also recommended as a potential improvement to the status quo. It recognizes the successes of the Discover Pass program, while identifying opportunities to (a) simplify and bundle the many state passes that currently exist, (b) pursue the development of a pass that would work on state and federal lands in Washington, and (c) evaluate and standardize exempt/discounted passes. Under this package, individuals who recreate on public lands would continue to support recreation operations/programming through the purchase of user-based passes/fees. Fiscal analysis is required to identify consistent price point to user (starting in \$30-35 range) and mechanisms to adjust price for inflation. This package recognizes that fees can support some recreation management needs, but not all agency funding needs so agencies should receive support from the State General Fund.

HOW THIS PACKAGE ADDRESSES PROVISO ELEMENTS: *Simplicity and Consistency*

Discover Pass Remains a Hangtag, Transferable Between Two Personal Vehicles: Recognizing this format does not work for all vehicles, state agencies offer a sticker for open-top vehicles and motorcycles. Pilot program opportunity: offer reduced price sticker(s) to everyone at time of purchasing annual Discover Pass. (Note: implementation actions only apply to sticker program).



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

Pass Purchasing: Retain existing opportunities to buy Discover Pass during vehicle registration, online, and in-person. Increase opportunities to buy state and federal passes at same point of purchase. Increase awareness of existing opportunities to buy Discover Pass on same day of intended recreation. (Note: Federal authorization required only for federal agencies to sell state passes.)



Administrative/
Programmatic



Federal
Authorization



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

Informed Discover Pass Pricing: Conduct further analysis and market research on price elasticity and mechanisms to account for inflation to enable informed and more consistent pricing for the public (inclusive of transaction fees). Analysis should also consider requiring the Discover Pass in association with more activities (such as camping or hunting).



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

Access To and Usability Of Information: Encourage/support state agencies (DNR, WDFW, and State Parks) to coordinate with federal agencies and other appropriate entities to develop common information portal.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Federal
Authorization



Requires New
Resources

State/Federal Fee Coordination: Legislature should direct state agencies (State Parks, DNR, WDFW) to engage with federal agencies (at least USFS, but explore opportunities with other federal agencies) to develop a single-pass for recreation lands in Washington. This group should develop detailed framework/proposals on pricing, pass format—including transferability of an existing product to other agency lands.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Federal
Authorization



Requires New
Resources



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

Consistent Free Days: Implement policy of up to 12 free days at lands managed by State Parks, DNR, and WDFW. Integrate DNR and WDFW into existing free-day policy of State Parks and add considerations for days of importance to individual agencies while retaining considerations given to federal free days.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Requires New
Resources

Simplicity on State Lands: DNR, State Parks, WDFW, in consultation with appropriate user groups, should develop proposals to bundle and simplify state agency/activity passes. Users should not be asked to pay more out of pocket, without corresponding benefits.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization

Motor-Vehicle Access: If a street-legal vehicle has an ORV license and is attended, that vehicle does not need a Discover Pass.



Legislative
Authorization

\$5 Donation at Time of Vehicle Registration: Retain.

Equity

Approach to Exemptions/Discounted Passes:

- Develop and adopt statutory language requiring agencies and the Legislature to apply principles of the the fiscal and social impact evaluation criteria/tool to existing and proposed exemptions.
- Retain exemptions for disabled veterans, except reservation transaction exemption, extend day-use access to DNR and WDFW.
- Use the fiscal and social impact evaluation criteria/tool and exemptions as a way to facilitate broader equity and access to public lands.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Requires New
Resources

Agency Fiscal Health

Reimbursement to Agencies to Implement Exemptions/Discount Programs: Agencies provide biennial estimates of cost to implement exemption programs to Office of Financial Management and Legislature, receiving reimbursement to the Recreation Access Pass Account (account that receives all Discover Pass Revenue).

Funding to Support Usability of Facilities/Amenities: Agencies consult with people with disabilities regarding the functionality and usability of existing facilities to help direct and prioritize capital spending on improving ADA accessibility of infrastructure.

Funding for Managing Public Resources.

Continue to Explore Additional Funding Opportunities.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Requires New
Resources



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

Single-Vehicle Pass System/Reduced Fees

This package was also recommended as a potential improvement to the status quo. It has many similarities to the Two-Vehicle package. It identifies opportunities to simplify and bundle state passes, pursues the development of a state/federal pass, and evaluates and standardize exemptions. But instead of a household, two-vehicle pass, the Discover Pass would become a lower-priced, single-vehicle pass, potentially required in conjunction with more activities such as camping (at State Parks) or hunting (at WDFW managed lands). A lower price would enable more households to participate in the Discover Pass program and recreate on state-managed lands. To encourage participation, buying a Discover Pass at the time of vehicle registration becomes the incentivized option. Individuals who chose not to buy a pass at the time of registration, and/or out-of-state visitors, could buy a higher-priced pass at a later date online or in-person. Fiscal analysis is required to determine pricing (starting at \$15-20 range) and mechanisms to adjust for inflation. Under this package, agency budgets should still include allocations from the State General Fund.

HOW THIS PACKAGE ADDRESSES PROVISO ELEMENTS: *Simplicity and Consistency*

Pass Format: Current Discover Pass hangtag would be replaced with a reduced price, valid for one-vehicle sticker (for license plate or window).



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

Pass Purchasing: Purchasing a pass at the time of vehicle registration becomes the incentivized option. Retain existing opportunities to buy online and in-person for individuals who opt-out of buying at the time of registration and out-of-state residents. Increase opportunities to buy state and federal passes at the same point of purchase.

Fiscal analysis should explore revenue sharing opportunities with Department of Licensing sub-agents (in-person vehicle registration locations).



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

Informed Discover Pass Pricing: Conduct further analysis and market research on price elasticity and mechanisms to adjust price with inflation to enable informed pricing for the public (with consideration for incentive pricing at Dept. of Licensing and consistent price point for the public, inclusive of transaction fees, at other points of purchase). Pricing analysis should begin in the \$15-20 range and consider changes to Discover Pass requirements (i.e. requiring Discover Pass in conjunction with camping or boating at State Parks and/or hunting or fishing at WDFW managed lands).



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

Access To and Usability Of Information: Encourage/support state agencies (DNR, WDFW, and State Parks) to coordinate with federal agencies and other appropriate entities to develop common information portal.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Federal
Authorization



Requires New
Resources

State/Federal Fee Coordination: Encourage/support state agencies (State Parks, DNR, WDFW) to engage with federal agencies (at least USFS, but explore opportunities with other federal agencies) to develop a single-pass for recreation lands in Washington. This group should develop detailed framework/proposals on pricing, pass format—including transferability of an existing product to other agency lands.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Federal
Authorization



Requires New
Resources

Consistent Fee Free Days: Implement policy of up to 12 free days at lands managed by State Parks, DNR, and WDFW. Integrate DNR and WDFW into existing free-day policy of State Parks and add considerations to days important to agencies while retaining considerations to federal free days.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Requires New
Resources

Simplicity on State Lands: DNR, State Parks, WDFW, in consultation with appropriate user groups, should develop proposals to bundle and simplify state agency/activity passes. Users should not be asked to pay more out of pocket, without corresponding benefits.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Potential to Generate
New Revenue

Motor-Vehicle Access: If a street-legal vehicle has an ORV license and is attended, that vehicle does not need a Discover Pass.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization

\$5 Donation at Time of Vehicle Registration: Retain, with potential to modify based on fiscal analysis. Modifications suggested include: opt-in donation to support all state recreation lands, exemption programs, OR favorite recreation site.

Equity

Approach to Exemptions/ Discounted Passes:

- Develop and adopt statutory language requiring agencies and the Legislature to apply principles of the fiscal and social impact evaluation criteria/tool to existing and proposed exemptions.
- Retain exemptions for disabled veterans, except reservation transaction exemption, extend day-use access to DNR and WDFW managed lands.
- Use the fiscal and social impact evaluation criteria/tool and exemptions as a way to facilitate broader equity in access to public lands



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Requires New
Resources

Agency Fiscal Health

Reimbursement to Agencies to Implement Exemptions/Discount Programs: Agencies provide biennial estimates of cost to implement exemption programs to Office of Financial Management and Legislature, receiving reimbursement to the Recreation Access Pass Account (account that receives all Discover Pass Revenue).

Funding to Support Usability of Facilities/Amenities: Agencies consult with people with disabilities regarding the functionality and usability of existing facilities to help direct and prioritize capital spending on improving ADA accessibility of infrastructure.

Funding for Managing Public Resources.

Continue to Explore Additional Funding Opportunities.



Administrative/
Programmatic



Legislative
Authorization



Requires New
Resources



5. Leadership Team Recommendations & Next Steps

WASHINGTON RECREATION FEES LEADERSHIP TEAM: RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

The “Pass-free Access Package” is the preferred recommendation, based on the voting members of the Leadership Team seeing it as the best fit with the parameters of the proviso. The “Two-vehicle Pass System - Building on Success Package” and “One-vehicle Pass System - Reduced Fees Package” are also recommended as potential improvements to the status quo.

Common Elements Across Packages

Each package presents a different, yet internally cohesive approach to increasing simplicity, consistency, and equity while maintaining agency fiscal health. However, some elements are consistent across multiple packages or would not preclude progress towards a specific package.

- **Access To and Usability Of Information:** encourage/support state agencies (DNR, WDFW, and State Parks) to coordinate with federal agencies and other appropriate entities to develop a common information portal.
- **State/Federal Fee Coordination:** encourage/support state agencies to engage with federal agencies to develop a single pass valid for state and federal recreation lands in Washington, along with a corresponding revenue-sharing agreement.
- **Implement Policy of Consistent Fee-Free Days** at state managed recreation lands.
- **Motor-Vehicle Access:** eliminate need for attended dual-registered ORVs to display a Discover Pass.
- **Informed Pricing:** prior to any decision to change products or prices, conduct fiscal and cost/benefit analysis, accounting for price elasticity, inflation, and parameters of fee/funding mechanism described in package(s)
- **Statewide Approach to Exemptions/Discounted Passes:**
 - Develop and adopt statutory language requiring agencies and the Legislature to apply principles of the the fiscal and social impact evaluation criteria/tool to existing and proposed exemptions; and
 - Retain exemptions for disabled veterans, except the reservation transaction exemption, and extend free day-use access to DNR and WDFW.
- **State Funding to Agencies:**
 - to increase usability of facilities/amenities;
 - reimbursement to implement exemptions/discount programs; and
 - to manage cultural, historic, and other public resources.

Elements Considered, But Not Recommended

The Leadership Team and work groups set out to think creatively and explore bold ideas to meet the terms of the proviso. Ideas considered, but not included, in the recommended packages are presented below to show the breadth of the wide-ranging and inclusive process.

- **State & Nationwide Pass:** Creating a pass that would be the sum of a Discover Pass + Interagency Pass (America the Beautiful)—a Washington state agency and federal nationwide combined pass—requires U.S. Congressional approval. It would also require education and awareness of rangers or other fee enforcement entities across multiple federal agencies nationwide.
- **Agency-Specific License Plates:** Vehicle-owners in Washington can choose to buy State Parks, WDFW, National Parks, or other license plates to support specific causes or entities. These plates provide funding to agencies but are not valid for access.
- **Fee Coordination Board:** One option the Leadership Team considered was the creation of a new, permanent board with diverse representation. This Board could have an advisory or decision-making role on issues such as fee levels or distribution of revenue among agencies. The Leadership Team expressed concern that such a board would be duplicative or delegate existing authority.
- **Pass Transferable Among 3+ Vehicles:** DNR, State Parks, and WDFW currently have the ability to offer a \$50 household Discover Pass; however, such a pass does not exist. Results from the survey conducted by DGSS indicate that the least preferred pass format/price is a more expensive pass that can be transferred to three vehicles or more.
- **Mechanism to Disperse State/Federal Pass Revenue:** The Washington Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) currently distributes grant funding to state and federal agencies in Washington. Since agencies are set up as vendors in the system, RCO could have an administrative function of dispersing money as directed by a pre-set formula; however, this would not build off existing mechanisms for collecting and dispersing revenue.
- **Different Pass Products:** During the Situation Assessment, throughout the Leadership Team/work group deliberations, and historically through bill proposals in the Legislature, many different ideas have been proposed to create new pass products (such as a more expensive, two-year Discover Pass or regional pass for certain park facilities). These products would contradict the Leadership Team’s recommendations to bundle and simplify state agency passes.
- **New Exemptions:** Since the establishment of the Discover Pass in 2011, there have been many bills to expand or extend exemptions. Instead of developing recommendations on each of the potential new exemption groups, the Leadership Team determined that creation of an evaluation tool (see Appendix G) would help the agencies and Legislature weigh the purpose, cost, usability, etc of all proposals.

Next Steps

Project Wrap-Up: The Leadership Team provided guidance and oversight as the Center compiled this report. Members of the Leadership Team, Agency Core Teams, and other interested entities had an opportunity to review the final draft for factual errors before it was finalized and distributed.

The proviso required a “report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature.” In addition to submitting the final written report, the Center, members of the Agency Core Team, and Leadership Team provided presentations to the House Environment Committee and House Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs Committee.

Implementation: Some elements within the packages are ready for implementation, while others require further data gathering and careful analysis and/or require further collaboration among various combinations of state and federal agencies, the Legislature, and interested parties.

The legislature and agencies should complete the work of this process by conducting a fiscal and cost/benefit analysis, that accounts for price elasticity, mechanisms to adjust price for inflation, and parameters of fee/funding mechanism described in package(s) prior to any decision to change products or prices (See Appendix J for draft budget proviso language).

Each package presents a different, yet internally cohesive approach to increasing simplicity, consistency, and equity while maintaining agency fiscal health. However, some elements are consistent across multiple packages or would not preclude progress towards a pass-free package (i.e. policy of consistent free days at state managed recreation lands). Implementation of many of these elements can be led by the state agencies, but may require support from the Legislature. Regarding the development of a regional state/federal pass, state land management agencies, with support from the Legislature, should engage with regional federal fee program managers at the US Forest Service, US Bureau of Reclamation, US Bureau of Land Management, US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service (including Interagency Pass program).

The agencies and Leadership Team look forward to working with the Governor and Legislature to understand your preferences moving forward.