



WTA at Work

Advocacy Agenda 2010

The top policy issues WTA will address in order to serve hikers

As Washington Trails Association looks ahead to the challenges and opportunities facing hikers in 2010, we have identified funding, resource protection and safety as our top concerns. Our advocacy agenda outlines the key actions we will take to advance the interests of hikers over the next twelve months. As always, hiker participation is key to our success.

Restore Funding for the Department of Natural Resources and the Non-highway and Off-road Vehicle Activities Program

In unsettled financial times, there are no safe bets. Last year, the legislature took action that was previously unthinkable. In order to keep State Parks open, the legislature transferred nearly \$10 million in Non-highway and Off-road Vehicle Activity (NOVA) program funds from the pool of potential grant recipients and the state agencies that it directly funds. This has left the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reeling as they try to fill an enormous budget gap in their recreation program. On the federal level, national forest ranger districts, such as Cle Elum on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, are wrestling with the challenges posed by losing a large and important component of their recreation program funding.

To restore needed funding, WTA will

- Lead a coalition of recreation organizations to lobby the legislature to compensate DNR for the remaining year of the biennial NOVA allocation in the 2010 Supplemental Budget.
- Advocate in fiscal committees in the state House and Senate to restore DNR's general fund cuts.
- Strategize with advocates and agency staff to find innovative new ways to fund DNR's recreation program in accord with the recommendations of the Sustainable Recreation Working Group.

Secure a 10 Percent Increase in the Fiscal Year 2011 Forest Service Budget

Congress has begun to take recreation seriously. The Interior Appropriations Committee in the House has presided over two consecutive budgets that increased funding for national forest recreation programs. The Troubled Assets Relief Program and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act both contained significant funding for trails. But a great deal of work remains to be done, both in rolling back decades of neglect and in repairing trails and roads damaged by storms in recent years.

To encourage stronger funding for trails managed by the U.S. Forest Service, WTA will

- Lobby Washington's congressional delegation to rally support for a 10 percent increase in the Forest Service Recreation and Trails budget over Fiscal Year 2010 levels.
- Lobby for a six-year authorization of the FLAME Act by the Senate, ensuring that recreation program funds will no longer be diverted to fight catastrophic wildfires.
- Ensure that the National Recreation Trails Program, which makes significant grants to trail



Snowscape on Tiger Mountain, land managed by the state Department of Natural Resources. Photo by Anne Morrison.



Bonanza Peak, deep within the Glacier Peak Wilderness. Photo by Krista Dooley.

projects in Washington, is included in the upcoming six-year reauthorization of the transportation budget.

- Encourage Interior Appropriations budget writers to include funds for enforcement programs on National Forest lands to handle challenges such as illegal target-shooting and the implementation of new federal rules on ORV use.

Stop Inappropriate Off-road Vehicle Use on National Forests

Several national forests in Washington are completing plans to determine where they will site motorized trails. The Off-Highway Vehicle Rule requires forests to decide specific trails on which off-road vehicle use will be legal, and then close off-trail areas to motorized recreation. On the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, planners have considered substantial increases in motorized routes, some of which are alarmingly close to wilderness and nonmotorized opportunities.

To prevent inappropriate ORV use on National Forests, WTA will

- Demonstrate new ways of planning on the Okanogan-Wenatchee that balance the interests of the motorized community with the needs of nonmotorized recreation users and the wildlife that depends on intact landscapes.
- Engage hikers local to the national forests interested in planning so that the interests of on-the-ground hiking communities can be heard.
- Propose substantive comments to the Forest Service at all levels of planning, both by organizing attendees at public meetings and by providing in-depth comments supported by the best and most current research and on-the-ground information.

Ensure the Safety of Hikers

Due to the increase in shooting on public lands, the hiking community has become more concerned about the intersection of hunting and target shooting and other forms of recreation. Additionally, a number of National Forest land managers have begun to raise concerns about the unmanaged and proliferating nature of target shooting on public lands. While hikers and hunters can easily share the woods given enough information and appropriate precautions, adequate information regarding hunting areas and seasons is challenging to find on agency websites, in their publications and at the trailhead.

To increase the safety of our trails, WTA will:

- Work with representatives in the hunting community to develop signs that would be placed by volunteers at trailheads around the state detailing when and where hikers might encounter hunters and what precautions hikers can take.
- Lobby for funds in this year's supplemental state budget to make the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's website easier for hikers to use.
- Work with our federal elected officials to allocate funds for more law enforcement on national forests.



Photo by Karl Forsgaard.



Photo by U.S.F.S.

Hiker Lobby Day: February 3, 2010

If you haven't marked your calendar for WTA's fourth annual Lobby Day, please take a moment and do so today! On February 3, hikers from around the state will descend on Olympia to meet and talk with their legislators about the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recreation budget, which suffered a 60 percent cut during the last legislative session. Those cuts could come at the cost of some of the state's finest DNR-managed recreation sites—including Mount Si, Tiger Mountain and Gothic Basin.

Lobby Day is a great opportunity to see the legislature in action. As WTA's lobbyist, I spend most of January through March in Olympia, meeting with legislators, attending committee hearings and testifying on legislation. It's important work, but nothing compared to constituents coming down to the Capitol to meet with their elected officials. Your legislators readily make time in their schedules and are genuinely interested in what you have to say about the issues that matter to hikers. They know you're a voter and that they were elected to represent you—and they treat you accordingly, with respect and real interest.

If you're interested in attending Hiker Lobby Day this year, please sign up through WTA's website or contact Kindra Ramos at kindra@wta.org. We will take care of scheduling meetings with your representatives and senator. ♦

—Jonathan Guzzo

