

## Action for Trails »

### Looking Ahead to the 2010 Legislative Session



**Mount Si is one of the most iconic peaks in Washington. It's managed by Washington's Department of Natural Resources. Photo by peachygreen.**

It's no surprise to anyone who reads a newspaper or occasionally checks in with the news that the economy is starting to recover—in fits and starts, certainly, but many indicators are trending in a slightly upward direction. That's good news, writ large.

The economy in Washington state, however, is likely to lag behind the national economy for several quarters, in much the same way that our downturn came a little later than the national economy's nosedive. In Washington, state revenues are still dipping, but at a slower rate.

Heading into the 2010 supplemental budget development period, we're looking at a \$238 million budget deficit. That's certainly much smaller than the \$9 billion gap that the House and Senate grappled with last year as they drafted a budget for the 2009-11 biennium. Still, after making painful cuts, lawmakers are facing even deeper reductions in state programs. Last year, state parks were on the chopping block. Nearly 40 parks were kept open by actions the legislature took to find new dedicated funding sources for the department and by the transfer of nearly \$10 million in Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) program funds. WTA will work with elected and agency officials to refund the remaining year of NOVA dollars in the 2010 supplemental budget. We'll also be laboring to find new and innovative

ways of funding DNR's recreation programs—such as reforming the State's landowner liability statutes so that DNR can charge user fees, and investigating the potential for a new class of trust lands to fund recreation.

WTA fought hard for a state budget that kept NOVA funding intact while still keeping parks open—as the Senate proposal did. When it became apparent that NOVA funds would be transferred to other budget priorities, we worked hard to make sure that those dollars would at least stay with land management agencies. We advocated that those dollars, if transferred, should be split between State Parks and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Ultimately, they all went to State Parks. Combined with deep slashes in DNR's general fund appropriation, this action resulted in a 60 percent cut in DNR's recreation budget. DNR responded by seasonally closing many sites and pulling back services at others.

In the upcoming legislative session, WTA will make the case that the state cannot continue to ignore DNR's recreation programs. State parks are certainly a critical public resource, and we'll work hard to make sure that they're funded and open to the public. Take even a quick glance at the landscapes that DNR manages, however, and you'll find plenty of hiking opportunities that rival the most beloved trails in our state



### Jonathan Guzzo

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parks and national forests.

Along the Interstate 90 corridor, for instance, DNR lands in the Issaquah Alps and Mount Si alone serve nearly one million hikers each year. In Snohomish County, the stony redoubt of Gothic Basin in the Sultan Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA) is managed by DNR. In southwest Washington, the Table Mountain NRCA draws hikers from Clark County to its wild reaches.

You might be surprised that some of your favorite places are managed by this little-understood public agency. We are convinced that once you see the places held in trust by DNR, you'll become a strong advocate for their increased funding and protection. We hope you will attend our annual Hiker Lobby Day on February 3 and make your voice heard in defense of these lands.

For more information on how to get involved in advocating for DNR, please don't hesitate to contact me at (206) 625-1367 or by email at jonathan@wta.org. ♦

#### ADVOCATE FOR TRAILS

**What: Hiker Lobby Day**

**When: February 3, 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

**Where: Olympia, Washington**

**Who: Anyone who cares about hiking and Washington's trails.**

**RSVP: kindra@wta.org**

## Hiker Lobby Day Will Be February 3

In 2009, WTA brought together more than 50 hikers from across the state to speak out for trails in Olympia. This event was a huge success connecting legislators with their hiking constituents and ensuring that trails and wildlands were not left out of important policy discussions.

In 2010, WTA will build upon our activists' momentum in terms of both numbers and results. Our 2010 Lobby Day will be focused on restoring and protecting funding for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which manages many great hiking areas including Mount Si and Tiger Mountain. We will also work to further WTA's efforts to make trails safer, by lobbying for a more user-friendly website for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, which will help hikers educate themselves about hunting seasons and areas.

While there will be some difficult conversations around budgeting this year, your presence can make a difference for the trails you love. Lobby Day consists of a morning workshop where you can learn more about the issues of the day and pick up some tips on meeting with your elected officials. Then we head to the capitol, where you will meet with your representatives and put your newfound skills to work. We hope you can join us in speaking out for trails. ♦

**More than 50 hikers visited Olympia for the 2009 Hiker Lobby Day. Photo by WTA.**



## WTA's WISHLIST

**Wondering what to get your favorite hiking advocacy group this winter? We happen to have a few suggestions.**

**A projector for our field office**

**A PC-compatible laser printer with envelope feeder and auto duplex for high volume print jobs**

**Functional digital point-and-shoot cameras for our trail maintenance crews**

**Graphic design services for two WTA t-shirts**

**And, of course, there's always cash.**

**If you make a tax-deductible gift to WTA by December 31, you will help us meet our \$22,500 goal and help us start strong in 2010.**

**To donate an item from the list above, email holly@wta.org.**

**To donate cash, visit [www.wta.org/give](http://www.wta.org/give) or mail a check to: Washington Trails Association, 2019 Third Ave, Ste. 100, Seattle, WA 98121.**