

**Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Outdoor Access and Responsible Recreation (OARR) Strategic Plan**

Frequently Asked Questions | DRAFT January 2024

1. Why is DNR developing the Outdoor Access and Responsible Recreation (OARR) Strategic Plan?

Following a [21 percent increase in visitation from 2019 to 2020](#), a trend that is expected to continue, DNR is developing the OARR Strategic Plan. The Plan will be designed to function as a statewide road map to guide future planning and ensure natural, cultural, and Tribal resources are respected and protected throughout the State, while offering high-quality, accessible recreation opportunities. DNR’s sister agencies – The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington State Parks, and the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office – all have statewide guiding strategies.

2. What is the timeline for the OARR Strategic Plan?

The Commissioner of Public Lands and DNR are targeting to release the Plan at the end of 2024. Tribes and the public will have an opportunity to review and comment on a draft plan, anticipated to be available in summer 2024.

3. How does the OARR Strategic Plan relate to landscape-level planning on DNR-managed lands?

DNR currently has landscape-level plans that cover some, but not all, recreation lands. These plans outline recreation needs and locations for a specific landscape, including new opportunities.

In contrast, the OARR Plan will set statewide priorities for the recreation program and provide high-level strategies for how to meet those priorities. This may include strategies to support current landscape-level initiatives or models for how to engage in future planning efforts.

4. How can I be involved in 2024?

DNR is holding a series of virtual and in-person meetings to engage with Tribes, beneficiaries, recreation partners, and the public. Information about these meetings is posted on the [OARR website](#). Please RSVP using this [form](#) to review meeting information, including location specifics.

Public Planning Meeting Dates and Locations:

January 18, 9:00 am – Noon: Ellensburg
January 23, 9:00 am – Noon: Lacey
February 1, 1:00 – 3:30 pm: Online

February 6, 9:00 – 11:30 am: Online
February 6, 6:00 – 8:30 pm: Online

DNR will also hold a workshop with statewide partners in late-winter 2024 to review and discuss initial strategies developed from the public planning meetings. DNR will invite the public to review and comment on a draft plan later in 2024. These engagement activities will be facilitated by an independent third-party, Triangle Associates, that DNR contracted with to help develop the plan. If you would like to receive updates, sign up for our [mailing list](#). To contact DNR with input or a question, please email OARRPlan@dnr.wa.gov.

5. How is DNR including equity and inclusion principles in the OARR planning process?

DNR is working to incorporate equity and inclusion principles in the development process for the OARR Strategic Plan. To date, the process has been designed with input from Tribes and a diverse sample of

DNR is also engaging communities underrepresented in outdoor spaces and has funding available to support participation from those communities. DNR is also available to attend regularly scheduled meetings hosted by interested community-based organizations (CBOs). Please contact DNR at OARRPlan@dnr.wa.gov for more information.

Part of DNR's commitment to an equitable process is to engage Tribes early, as DNR recognizes Tribes are sovereign nations with rights to resources recognized by the United States and State of Washington. DNR also understands that while Tribal rights are legally recognized, they have not historically been reflected in natural resource planning efforts.

6. How is DNR involving Tribes in the OARR Planning Process and why is DNR taking this approach?

Overall, DNR operates under [Commissioner Order 201029](#) to ensure management of state-owned lands is done in collaboration with all Tribes. DNR is co-developing the OARR strategic plan with Tribes following a commitment made by the Commissioner of Public Lands to Tribal leaders at DNR's Annual Tribal Leadership Summit in July 2023. Tribes have a sovereign right to use natural and cultural resources as recognized by treaties, statutes, executive orders, and court decisions. DNR understands that many federally recognized Tribes rely on access to DNR-managed lands to practice those rights.

In fall 2023, DNR held four Tribal forums across the State to co-develop draft goals for the OARR strategic plan with Tribes. DNR will continue to engage with Tribes in 2024 as a draft plan is developed and after a draft is released for review.

7. What state lands and recreation sites does DNR manage?

DNR manages 3 million acres of State Trust Lands, 2 million acres of State-Owned Aquatic Lands and 97 natural areas covering 170,000 acres. This includes 1,300 miles of trails and more than 200 recreation sites, including 80 campgrounds. The OARR Strategic Plan aims to address recreation on all DNR land types. DNR does not have the authority to address recreation on other ownerships—OARR is specific to DNR-managed lands only.

8. What are State Trust Lands and who are State-Trust Beneficiaries?

DNR manages 3 million acres of State Trust Lands, some but not all are managed as working forests. About 80 percent of these lands were granted to Washington by the Federal government at statehood in 1889 (Federal Grant Lands) and an additional 20 percent were acquired from counties (State Forest Lands) in the 1920s and 1930s.

Unlike other publicly managed lands, State Trust Lands come with a legal responsibility to generate revenue for designated trust beneficiaries in perpetuity. Some revenue is distributed directly to trust beneficiaries and other revenue is deposited into permanent investment funds. Trust beneficiaries from Federal Grant Lands include K-12 schools and public higher education. State Forest Land trust beneficiaries include counties, who typically distribute revenue to taxing districts such as schools, libraries, road department, ports, hospitals, and other local services.

Over 80 percent of revenue generated on State Trust Lands comes from timber harvest across 2.1 million acres of forested State Trust Lands. For more information, see the document [linked here](#).

9. What are DNR’s responsibilities and authorities as a land manager?

DNR’s mission is to: *Manage, sustain, and protect the health and productivity of Washington’s lands and waters to meet the needs of present and future generations.* DNR has many authorities and responsibilities as a land manager, including:

- Wildfire management on all lands in Washington (not only DNR-managed lands)
- Regulating Forest Practices on all non-Federal lands
- Managing revenue generation from State Trust Lands
- Managing over 6 million acres of State-Owned Aquatic Lands, State Trust Lands, and Natural Areas
- Managing recreation and recreation sites where compatible with the state trust mandate

10. How does DNR currently manage recreation on DNR-managed lands?

DNR’s recreation program is managed at both the state and regional level. In the state recreation program office, housed in the Recreation and Conservation Division, which has eleven funded recreation staff positions plus the division manager (as of January 2024). The recreation program supports regional recreation staff, sets DNR statewide policy and priorities, and manages state funding.

For uplands, there are [six DNR Regions](#) across the state, each with region recreation staff that manage outdoor access and recreation at the landscape level. For more information about DNR’s landscape-level recreation planning, [see this webpage](#). Public involvement is an important part of these planning processes.

11. What is the Multiple Use Act and what is DNR’s authority regarding recreation?

Recreation on lands managed by DNR are governed by DNR’s state trust mandate and the Multiple Use Act ([RCW 79.10.120](#)). The Multiple Use Act gives DNR the authority to provide and designate areas for recreation that are compatible with the trust mandate. Activities that are not compatible with the trust mandate may be permitted only if there is compensation satisfying fiduciary obligations to the trust.

12. What is trust compensation for recreation sites on State Trust Lands?

When recreation sites are built on State Trust Lands and there is an effect on revenue for trust beneficiaries, DNR uses leases or Commissioner Orders to ensure the trust is compensated at fair market value for the recreation land use.

13. Where is a Discover Pass required to access DNR-managed lands and how does the cost of the Discover Pass fund recreation management?

The Discover Pass is required for access to all State recreation lands, including those managed by DNR, Washington State Parks, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. These recreation lands comprise of 160 recreation sites, including 80 campgrounds, 1,300 miles of trails, and opportunities for dispersed recreation. Discover Pass fees generate funding for all three agencies. Eight percent of the total Discover Pass revenue— or about \$1.75 million annually – goes to DNR, which funds 14 percent of DNR’s recreation budget.

14. What is known about how outdoor access and recreation can impact the environment, including wildlife?

DNR understands that increasing demand for recreation can adversely affect natural resources. For example, two recent Pacific Northwest focused studies looked at how motorized and non-motorized recreation can both reduce and fragment elk habitat.¹ DNR sees a proactive strategic plan, like OARR, as a tool to help identify how to provide sustainable recreation opportunities while protecting resources important to Tribes, trust beneficiaries, and the public.

15. What economic benefits does recreation create in Washington?

Visitors to state-managed recreation lands (state lands managed by all state agencies) supported \$5.9 billion in spending on goods and services (direct and indirect) in 2019 and 2020, per a 2021 study.² The study also concluded that for every \$1 spent by recreation users, \$1.80 in economic activity is generated within the state economy. This spending supports more than 37,000 full- and part-time jobs, \$1.65 billion in labor income (wages), and more than \$435 million in local and state tax revenue.

16. How does DNR use and manage funding for recreation?

DNR uses a patchwork of funding sources, including grants and specific legislative requests to manage recreation statewide. These funding sources are highly variable and at current levels, DNR does not have enough funding to maintain existing infrastructure. Primary funding sources are listed below.

- Off-road Vehicle and Non-Highway Vehicle (Gas Tax Refund)
- Grants from the Recreation and Conservation Office
- Discover Pass Revenue
- State General Fund
- State Capital Appropriation

¹ (1) [Spatiotemporal Responses of Elk to Recreation in the West Cascades, University of Washington, 2003](#) (2) [Seeking Ground Less Traveled: Elk Responses to Recreation, U.S. Forest Service, 2019](#)

² [Outdoor Recreation on State Lands](#), Earth Economics, 2021