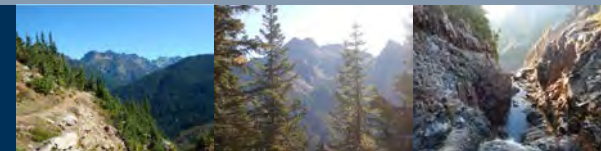




# Natural Resources Conservation Areas Act RCW 79.71

- Established in 1987
- Authorized creation of NRCAs, for benefit of current and future generations
- To protect areas worthy of conservation for their outstanding ecological and scenic values
- To provide opportunities for low impact public use

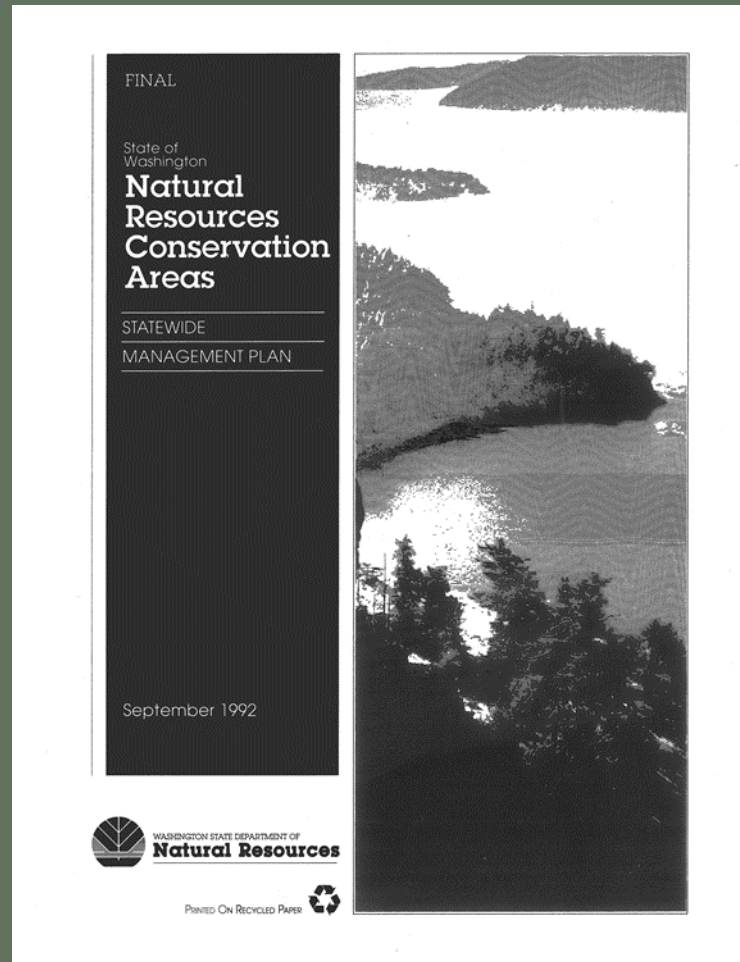


# Natural Resources Conservation Area Act

- Authorizes DNR to acquire property worthy of conservation
- Defines types of property to be acquired
- Defines management goals/potential uses
- Requires a management plan for each site



# Natural Resources Conservation Areas Statewide Management Plan



Morning Star Trails Planning





# NRCA Statewide Management Plan

- Developed in collaboration with a statewide advisory committee
- Establishes guiding program policy
- Provides overview of NRCA Program
- Provides direction for, and standardizes development of site-specific management plans



# Guiding Program Policy

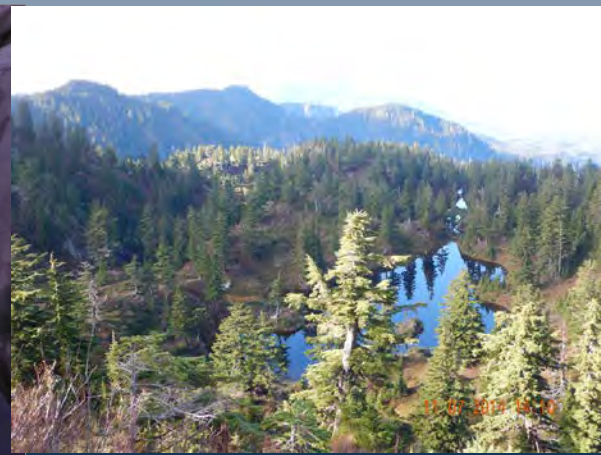
- **Primary purpose is conservation**
- **Property acquisition by willing sellers only**
- **Management emphasis protecting ecological systems, habitat, and scenic landscapes**





# People-Oriented Uses in NRCAs

- Will not adversely affect a site's natural resources
- Must be appropriate to site's maintenance as a relatively unmodified natural setting
- Must not disrupt long-term ecological processes



# Protection/Enhancement/Restoration

Prior to identifying areas with potential for low impact public and environmental education uses, each site management plan shall identify significant resources to be conserved, and shall address the long term maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of these resources, including habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, and well as scenic landscapes.





# Low-Impact Public Use

Following identification of and planning for natural resources to be protected, site management plans shall identify those areas with potential for low-impact public uses that do not detract from long-term ecological processes.



# Outdoor Environmental Education

RCW 79.71 (the Act) requires identification of areas suitable for outdoor environmental education. On site environmental education will only be allowed if it will not adversely affect the resource values, is appropriate to maintenance of the site in a relatively unmodified natural setting, and does not detract from long-term ecological processes.



# Commodity Base Activities

Commodity-based activities may be allowed within an NRCA if they are consistent with the Act's conservation purposes and compatible with resource protection, authorized low-impact public use, and environmental education. Such uses include, but are not limited to:

- Agriculture and Grazing
- Aquaculture
- Mining





# Stewardship Activities

Activities and opportunities that enhance the protection, restoration, low-impact public use, and outdoor education of a site will be encouraged. Such uses include, but are not limited to:

- Weed Control
- Forestry Activities
- Fire Management
- Fire Protection



# Other Activities

Other activities, not identified as commodity based or stewardship, may be allowed if they enhance or are consistent with NRCA program goals. Such uses include:

- **ROADS**
  - Most existing to be abandoned
  - New only in very limited circumstances
- **LEASES AND PERMITS**
  - Only when consistent with program goals
  - Temporary only
  - No Exclusive Use



# Other Activities

- **NATURAL EVENTS (Fire, Wind, Flood)**
  - DNR may suppress to protect health, safety or property
  - DNR may employ restoration follow-up as necessary to prevent environmental damage or maintain natural systems
  - Selected sites may be managed absent intervention to let natural processes occur
- **INSECT CONTROL**
  - On rare occasion when insects declared public nuisance, or as when within infestation control district





# Other Activities

- **FACILITIES**

- Generally limited to those that accommodate low-impact public use
- Existing evaluated for protection, maintenance, or removal; retained only when contribute to a program goal
- Historical structures retained if consistent with NRCA purposes



# Cultural Resources

Site management plans will consider what cultural resources may be present (including historic and contemporary cultural use and archaeological resources) on the NRCA, and methods to protect them.



# Evaluation Criteria for Allowable Uses

All potential human activities and uses must be evaluated to ensure they are compatible with other uses, will not exceed the site's limits of acceptable change, are realistic in view of individual site characteristics and local conditions, and are compatible with overall implementation strategies and program goals.

- Identify and map sensitive resources
- Identify and evaluate potential human activities
- Define limits of acceptable change
- Implement and monitor





# Monitoring

Site management plans must contain a process that identifies how and which resources will be monitored. Monitoring plans must be in place before stewardship prescriptions can be approved. Two types of monitoring are required:

- Ecological monitoring
- Low-impact use monitoring
- Define limits of acceptable change
- Implement and monitor



# Conditional/Excluded Uses

Uses (including commodity-based) which are destructive of resources, aesthetically offensive, disruptive, incompatible with cultural values, limiting or curtailing to existing life on the site, or that pose health and safety concerns, will not be allowed.



# Conditional/Excluded Uses

Prior to approval, conditional uses generally require consideration during public, site-specific management planning process. In considering what activities are allowed, the site advisory committee will apply conditions related to the following uses:

- Motorized vehicles
- Hunting/trapping/shooting
- Non-motorized vehicles
- Mining
- Collecting plants, mushrooms, or firewood
- Unleashed pets
- Timber harvest



# Boundaries

The recommended boundary of each NRCA shall be included in the site management plan. Boundary establishment, and adjustments to boundaries, require a public hearing and approval the Commissioner of Public Lands.

- Should include additional property suitable for future inclusion in the NRCA
- May include other-agency or private property
- Should include sufficient area to provide buffers to sensitive features within the boundary of the NRCA



# Regulations and Law Enforcement

**Existing Department Law Enforcement Policy shall apply to all law enforcement actions relating to NRCAs.**

- Uses and activities within an NRCA, not consistent with the Act's conservation purposes, shall be considered in violation of the Act**
- DNR's existing law enforcement policies shall apply**





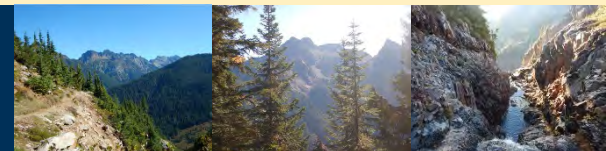
# Morning Star Trails Plan

- Not a management plan per se, but
- Consistent with established policy
- Site-specific, conservation-first approach
- Created in collaboration with this planning committee as part of a public process
- Will guide DNR trail management decisions for next decade or more



# Morning Star Trail Planning Objective and Goals

- Overview of the Planning Grant that is funding this process
- Share examples of some of the known issues that need to be addressed
- Discuss the objective of this planning process
- Discuss some specific goals of this planning process



# Morning Star Trail Planning

Funded through Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Grant Program.

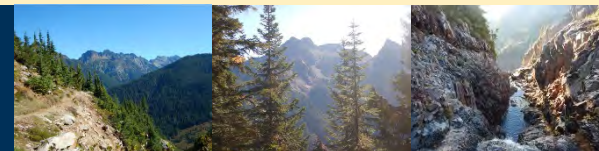
The project funding will support two main elements:

## 1. Trail planning funding

(Parks Planner, Landscape Architect, Cartographer, Field Reconnaissance, Facility Rentals, other supporting staff)

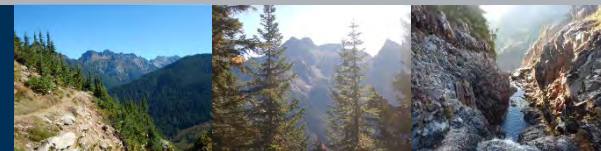
## 2. Design and Permitting of at least one priority project

(Example: Design and permit new bridge crossings along the old South Shore Spada Lake Road)



# Ashland Lakes

- Several poorly located campsites
- Some campsites not used
- Impacts to sensitive plants
- Miles of aging boardwalk

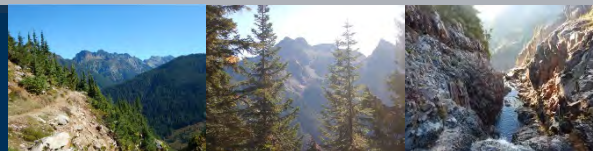




Closed

# Twin Falls Lake

- Outdated interpretive signage
- Several failed wooden bridges
- Impacts to sensitive plants and animal habitat

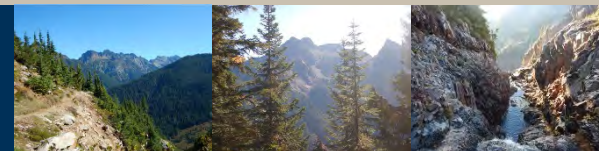




Closed

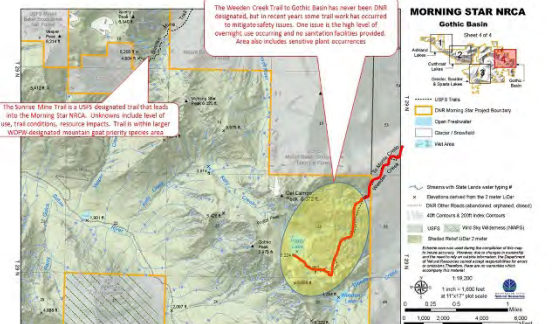
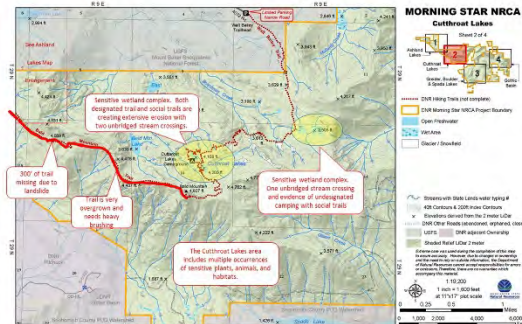
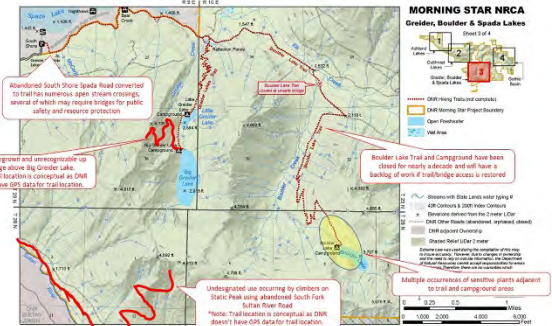
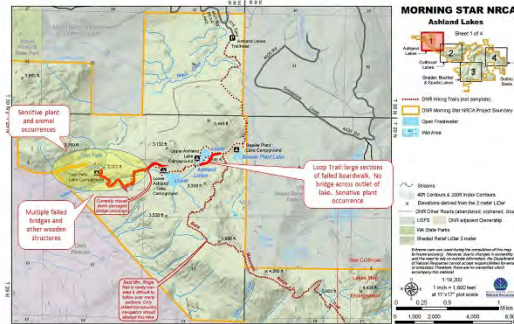
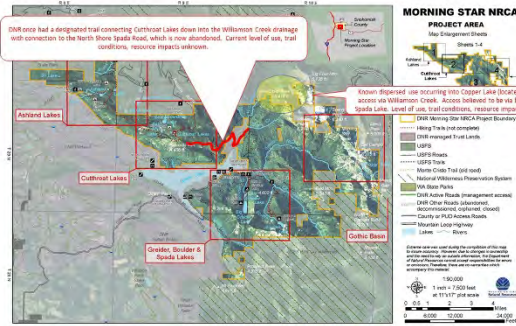
# Boulder Lake Trail

- New bridge(s) required
- Extensive trail brushing/logging out needed
- Impacts to sensitive species
- No maintenance in over a decade





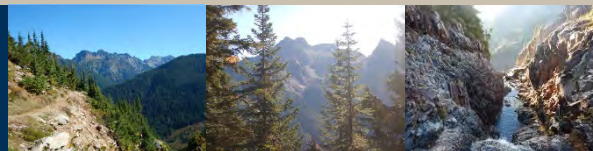
# Known Issues



## Morning Star NRCA Known Issues

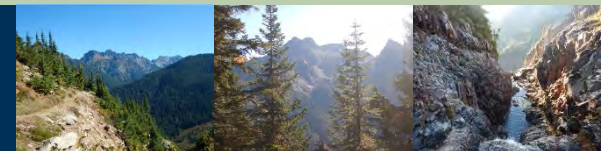


## Morning Star Trails Planning



# Objective for Planning

The Committee is an advisory body to the DNR. The DNR will use the Committee's recommendations to write the Trail Plan and will then go through the SEPA public review process. The Trail Plan will guide recreation management of this area for the next 10-15 years.





# Goals for Planning

## Identify:

- Areas for restoration of current impacts
- Areas for renovation of degraded trails
- Areas where new development could occur
- Areas that developed recreation should avoid
- Ideas about how to better manage recreation and its impacts

## Things to keep in mind and/or think about:

- Funding and/or available resources to implement
- Costs and/or complexities for permitting and construction in remote areas
- What level of construction is necessary?
- What types of amenities should campground facilities have?
- How do we manage human waste?
- To the extent possible, the Trail Plan should serve as a proactive approach towards recreation management and should inform decisions about where recreation should occur on the landscape, as opposed to where it has occurred.

