



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES
HILARY S. FRANZ | COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS

Date: January 8, 2025

To: All Washingtonians

From: Recreation & Conservation Division, Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Subject: Updates to Outdoor Access and Responsible Recreation (OARR) Strategic Plan Resulting from Public Comment

To All Washingtonians,

DNR would like to thank everyone who provided input during the extensive public engagement process for development of the OARR Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan). DNR released a draft plan and invited public review and comment between October 21, 2024 and November 21, 2024.

DNR would like to thank all who participated in one of the three Strategic Plan public comment meetings and all who submitted a public comment during the public comment period.

In total, 65 people attended the public comment meetings, 154 individuals or organizations completed the public comment survey, and 26 supplemental public comment letters were submitted. DNR reviewed all comments received and made several updates to the Strategic Plan, which were informed by these public comments. The following is a high-level summary of those changes provided to help readers understand how DNR changed the Strategic Plan after public comment.

Thank you for your input in the development of the final Strategic Plan.

Brody Coval,
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Washington Department of Natural Resources

Public Comment Themes

After reviewing all unique comments, DNR observed four major themes resulting from the Strategic Plan public comment period:

1. Suggestions to include facilitated recreation in the Strategic Plan.
2. Concerns about the way the draft Strategic Plan explained how resource impacts can result from increased recreation use.
3. Site-specific access requests.
4. Requests for increased motorized recreation opportunities.

Revisions to Strategic Plan Following Public Comments

The following is a list highlighting some of the major updates DNR made to the final Strategic Plan informed by public comments.

1. *Added Potential Partnerships with Facilitated Recreation Providers*

DNR added a definition for facilitated recreation and references to it throughout the Strategic Plan. DNR also named “facilitated recreation providers” as potential DNR partners whose expertise in outdoor education and responsible recreation curriculum (e.g., Leave-No-Trace) could help DNR achieve the Strategic Plan’s goals. Lastly, DNR made updates to two actions (S9 NTA-02 and S11 OA-01) to include facilitated recreation.

DNR made these additions in response to input that facilitated recreation was not mentioned in the Strategic Plan and that facilitated recreation providers can aid with education and stewardship goals.

2. *Clarified Strategic Plan Framing of Resource Impacts and Increasing Visitor Use*

DNR updated several paragraphs in Section 5 to clarify that with proactive management there are opportunities to protect resources and provide recreation opportunities. DNR added it “recognizes that many variables can influence impacts to resources [resulting from outdoor access] including volume and type of use, land management capacity, and the environmental context at a specific location.... [the] Strategic the Plan provides a proactive approach to conserve natural ecosystems and offer sustainable outdoor access and high-quality recreation...”

DNR made this clarification as several organizations expressed concern the draft Strategic Plan told a simplistic narrative that increased visitor use uniformly results in a linear increase in resource impacts. The final plan tells a more nuanced story.

3. ***Additional Revisions Resulting from Public Comment***

- Multiple sections were updated by DNR to clarify that there is currently a **\$9 million shortfall** to manage and maintain recreation on DNR lands. This shortfall does not include the additional funding needed to implement the actions in the OARR Strategic plan.
- DNR clarified **trust lands are managed with significant conservation considerations**. To further elaborate this point, DNR added references and links to DNR's publicly available *Policy for Sustainable Forests and Habitat Conservation on State Trust Lands* plan.
- DNR added a new, short paragraph to pg. 22 which recognizes **the emergence of new technologies** as an additional management challenge. The paragraph further elaborates that some new technology has contributed to increased impacts from overcrowding and user conflict.
- DNR made several minor text updates to clarify that the **Strategic Plan addresses all forms of outdoor access including, but not limited to, recreation**. This is because the DNR Recreation and Conservation Division manages and is responsible for the effects of all forums of public access, broadly. For example, DNR recreation staff are often responsible for cleaning up trash and illegal dumping, regardless of whether the trash resulted from a recreation-based activity or not. DNR further clarified that partners also help with trash clean up on DNR-managed lands.
- DNR added a graphic showing **how strategies and actions are structured in the Strategic Plan**. Additionally, DNR added a table linking strategies to specific goals in the Strategic Plan. It's important to note that the strategies support multiple goals.
- DNR added a new action (S9-OA05) for **assessing parking, transit access, and trailhead infrastructure** to prioritize sites for access improvements, which will benefit DNR's equity and climate goals.
- DNR made several updates clarifying that **recreation occurs in state-owned aquatic lands (SOAL) and uplands**. Additionally, three new actions (S1-NTA05, S1-OA01, & S3-NTA07) were added in relation to SOAL access.

- DNR clarified that increasing the **capacity of DNR Maintenance Trail Stewards and Recreation Managers** at the region level will be key to successfully implementing” the Strategic Plan.
- DNR added a new action (S4-OA10) for coordination within DNR Divisions to **integrate recreation planning** with forest health, climate change, and wildfire recovery planning.

4) Areas of No Change

DNR did not update the Strategic Plan in response to site-specific requests or requests for increased opportunities for specific use types. Site specific actions are not typical in statewide strategic plans. The Strategic Plan provides DNR with a management framework to use at regional and local scales that will help determine where site-specific actions and changes to or investment in outdoor access may or may not be appropriate.

Next Steps

DNR has finalized the Strategic Plan, which was informed by a robust tribal and public engagement process (see Section 06) and public comments on the draft Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan lays out multiple strategies and actions articulating how it will collaboratively implement the Strategic Plan with Tribes, partners, and user groups, and keep the public informed throughout implementation.

Thank you again for your partnership in the process and moving forward.