

Natural Resources/Operating

State Parks and Recreation Commission, Department of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Natural Resources

Prevent wildfires and restore habitat

Wildfires impact public lands, causing extensive damage to habitat and infrastructure. Funding will help State Parks and Fish and Wildlife restore wildlife habitat when this happens. These efforts create healthy and vibrant habitat with native vegetation and prevent noxious weed infestations. However, frequent and intense wildfires, declining forest health, and expanding human populations next to forests increase the risk of debris flow after a wildfire. With this funding, the Department of Natural Resources will assess the potential for debris flow in recently burned areas, monitor rainfall effects on burned slopes, and model 'debris flow potential' to provide emergency managers and communities with early warnings.

(\$2.7 million General Fund-State)

Fund wildfire response

The Department of Natural Resources responded to more than 1,000 wildfires that burned 102,942 acres of land in 2023. While Washington had less acres burned and less fire occurrences in 2023 than in the previous 10-year average, a few significant fires posed serious threats and destructive impacts to improved property. Two of the most damaging wildfires, the Gray and the Oregon, occurred

in Spokane County during August. Additional funding will cover the costs of suppressing these fires.

(\$20.8 million GF-S, \$19.4 million Budget Stabilization Account, \$8.8 million General Fund-Federal, \$2.5 million other)

Department of Ecology

More federal support for grants

The Department of Ecology received increased federal funding for environmental and public health initiatives, partially from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act. New funding will support water infrastructure improvements, pollution cleanup, and efforts to address the climate crisis across Washington. More specifically, the National Estuary program's grant award will support a diverse set of stormwater pollution prevention and restoration projects in and around Puget Sound.

(\$34.5 million GF-F)

Protect state waters

A recent U.S. Supreme Court decision considerably narrowed the federal Clean Water Act's scope. This reduced federal protection for various water bodies, including many wetlands. Despite this, Washington's Water Pollution Control Act still safeguards all state wetlands and waters from pollution. To ensure continued protection, the Department of Ecology will develop a program to require permits for projects that impact water bodies no longer

protected by the federal Clean Water Act. Funding will help the department develop the new permit and absorb the increased workload associated with reviewing the 50-100 new projects seeking state authorization.

(\$2.4 million Model Toxics Control Operating Account)

Minimize harmful nutrients in water to protect fish

Excess nutrients in Puget Sound significantly degrade water quality, disrupt the food chain, and harm orca and salmon populations. These nutrients come primarily from wastewater treatment plants and agricultural runoff, lowering oxygen levels in the water and making it harder for fish to breathe. The Department of Ecology will continue recommending how to develop a new program that reduces excess nutrient contamination more efficiently. The program would provide wastewater treatment plants with the ability to offset their nutrient contamination by purchasing credits. Revenue from these credit purchases would fund projects that quickly reduce nutrients. The department will research the types of projects that would qualify, engage with communities, Tribes, and other stakeholders, and develop the technical materials to create the program.

(\$410,000 Model Toxics Control Account)

Recreation and Conservation Office

Assess data studies for outdoor recreation

The Recreation and Conservation Office provides statewide leadership and funding to protect and improve the best of Washington's natural and outdoor recreation resources, using

data to inform decisionmakers and policy. Funds will help the office update its economic analysis of outdoor recreation in Washington. It will also help the office work with federal partners and identify how to replace or enhance recreation opportunities associated with the drawdown of reservoirs if the lower Snake River dams are removed.

(\$1.2 million GF-S)

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Maintain salmon recovery

Salmon populations continue to struggle against climate change, habitat loss, pollution, and other factors. While recent legislative efforts have shored up salmon recovery, the governor's proposed funding reflects the wide range of recovery efforts needed to address this complex issue. WDFW will increase surveys and monitoring for coastal salmonids on the Olympic Peninsula. The agency will also improve fish production investments for fish health, Endangered Species Act compliance, fish tagging and marking capacity, and hatchery facility maintenance. The department will support non-native predator suppression in Lake Washington and advance ecosystem restoration projects in the Whidbey Basin.

(\$6.6 million GF-S, \$13.4 million GF-F)

Department of Natural Resources

Support department activities with federal grants

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) received multiple new federal funding grants and increases to existing federal grant awards. The funding supports department activities such as managing landslide risk,

assessing mineral deposits, collecting lidar data, increasing urban tree cover, and reducing the risk of wildfire in at-risk communities.

(\$36.6 million GF-F)

Create pilot program to manage target shooting

Target shooting on lands managed by the DNR is a significant safety and lead contamination issue because the action is often dispersed and unauthorized. DNR will pilot the development of two designated shooting ranges with capital budget funding, initiate a stakeholder process to determine potential locations for future ranges, and address the lead pollution in highly contaminated areas. The agency aims to manage target shooting effectively, enhance safety and mitigate environmental impacts.

(\$710,000 GF-S, \$473,000 Model Toxics Control Operating Account)

Mitigate European Green Crab

European Green Crab is an ecologically destructive invasive species and poses a significant threat to marine areas in Washington, including Puget Sound, Willapa Bay, and Grays Harbor. DNR will employ staff, acquire necessary equipment, and implement an annual work plan to safeguard state-owned aquatic lands. This includes Aquatic Reserves, Natural Resources Conservation Areas, and other high-value marine habitat.

(\$857,000 GF-S)

Department of Agriculture

Enhance emergency food and strengthen food resiliency

Food insecurity is not reducing in scale or scope despite the pandemic ending. Food bank use has increased 33% from this time last year and the sustained rise in food prices impacts food banks just as it impacts individual households. The Emergency Food Assistance program is our state's long-standing program for distributing emergency food funding to underserved communities and supporting hunger relief organizations. This investment provides stopgap funding to ensure hunger relief organizations can keep helping people in need. Federal funding also includes the capacity to invest in supply chains that support regional food system resiliency.

(\$9.3 million GF-S, \$10.2 million GF-F)

Minimize invasive species, pests and agricultural disease

Eradicating invasive species is critical to protecting the state's forestry and agricultural sectors. Based off the department's 2023 trapping information, it needs additional support to control current spongy moth and Japanese beetle issues. The agency proposes to create an emergency response account it can use when it declares an agricultural pest or disease emergency or quarantine. This increases the department's ability to rapidly respond to emerging threats and builds resilience for agricultural industries.

(\$3.6 million GF-S, \$351,000 GF-F)

Advance agriculture

The department supports the viability and vitality of agriculture in the state. However, Washington's agriculture industry faces a severe labor shortage and new challenges from climate change, supply chain disruptions and evolving markets. In response, the department will focus on improvement in a few key areas. It will study emerging markets to help hemp producers navigate a complex regulatory landscape. It will also offer farmers and ranchers in crisis the appropriate financial-focused outreach and education. Finally, the department will partner with four established education programs (such as Future Farmers of America) to invest in agricultural leadership programs that build adaptation, resiliency, and diversity for career success in the agriculture industry.

(\$1.3 million GF-S)

Natural Resources/Capital

Note: Some of the items in this section also appear Climate breakout sections of Budget Highlights.

Improve air quality

Department of Ecology

Support the Electric School Bus program

Grants will help school districts transition diesel-run school buses and other student transport vehicles to zero emission vehicles. These grants will also support fueling the infrastructure we need to increase zero-emission student transportation.

(\$32.4 million Carbon Emissions Reduction Account-State)

Develop housing

Department of Natural Resources

Develop affordable housing

DNR will develop housing on DNR lands zoned 'residential' or that are best suited for housing development. The department will sell, auction, or lease underperforming trust lands to another government entity or public housing authority. Funding may be used for land improvements, including infrastructure, architecture and engineering feasibility and site plans, and permitting for site improvements.

(\$2.3 million bonds)

Clean up toxics

Department of Ecology

Support settlement cleanup

This funding will help continue cleanup efforts and habitat restoration among four contaminated sites in western Washington.

(\$2.2 million Cleanup Settlement Account-State)

Support Eastside Fire and Rescue PFAS cleanup

The department will investigate and clean up per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) at Eastside Fire and Rescue headquarters in Issaquah. Funding will help prepare an Interim Action work plan that includes treating carbon in groundwater and removing contaminated soil.

(\$2 million Model Toxics Control Capital Account-State)

Protect salmon and habitat

State Conservation Commission

Match federal funds for Regional Conservation Partnership program

Funding will add matching funds for federally-approved projects related to the Regional Conservation Partnership program. This action will better restore and sustain soil, water, wildlife, and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales.

(\$3 million bonds)

Recreation and Conservation Office

Fund Salmon Recovery Funding Board programs

The agency will implement the Salmon Recovery Act and provide funding for projects that protect or restore salmon habitat, and for other salmon recovery programs and activities across the state. While other grant programs concentrate on a particular geographic region or bring in other non-salmon values, this is the only grant program in Washington that focuses exclusively on protecting and restoring salmon habitat statewide. Projects are developed locally and

evaluated to assess if and how well each will implement the priorities listed in federally-adopted salmon recovery plans.

(\$25 million Natural Climate Solutions Account – State)

Protect coastal habitat

The agency will restore aquatic and terrestrial habitat on the Washington coast to protect the stronghold of salmon populations and provide jobs. Projects strengthen communities through job creation, more work options for local contractors, flood control, habitat access improvement, climate resiliency and more.

(\$7.6 million Natural Climate Solutions Account – State)

Support Estuary and Salmon Restoration program

Funding will protect and restore the Puget Sound nearshore ecosystem for salmon recovery. The program is managed cooperatively by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Recreation and Conservation Office, and the Puget Sound Partnership.

(\$11 million Natural Climate Solutions Account – State)

Maintain Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board projects

The agency will fund fish barrier removal projects on the biennial project list that the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board prioritizes. The board prioritizes projects based on watershed and transportation project considerations that will benefit barrier removal efforts the most.

(\$22 million Natural Climate Solutions Account – State)

Improve carbon storage and sequestration

Recreation and Conservation Office

Upper Green River Forest carbon storage

The Tacoma Public Utilities will acquire 15,000 acres of industrial timberland in its drinking water watershed in the Upper Green River. This land comes from willing landowners to help Washington grow older, structurally-complex forest. The goals are to increase carbon storage, protect water quality, improve habitat for forest-related biodiversity, and improve aquatic habitat to support returning salmon and other aquatic species.

(\$25 million Natural Climate Solutions Account - State)

Protect forest lands

The department will protect and enhance community forest lands by acquiring land and developing collaborative models of community-based forest management. Forest lands typically span at least five acres, can sustain natural vegetation, and often have the capacity to be reforested.

(\$5.8 million Natural Climate Solutions Account - State)

Increase forest carbon storage and sequestration

Grants for private, Tribal, and local government forest landowners will help these groups holistically take care of forests by using cost-effective strategies that go beyond standard requirements. Taking care of forests this way extends how long the forest can continue capturing and storing carbon.

(\$5 million Natural Climate Solutions Account - State)

Support recreation

Parks and Recreation Commission

Construct full-service park in Nisqually

The commission will construct a new park entrance as part of the new full-service park in partnership with the Nisqually Indian Tribe. The park will be open for day use and a variety of overnight accommodation opportunities.

(\$3.7 million bonds)

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Acquire Sekiu Boat Ramp

Purchasing Sekiu boat ramp property in northwest Clallam County will offer Washingtonians long-term boating access for public recreational fishing at the oldest operating fishing resort in the state.

(\$2.7 million bonds)

Department of Natural Resources

Invest in YMCA Camp Colman

DNR will address the impact of tidal gate removal and restore fish passage on YMCA Camp Colman at Whiteman Cove. These investments will also support an environmental learning center predesign.

(\$2.1 million bonds)

Establish recreational target shooting sites

The department will develop site, permit, and construct two near-term designated target shooting sites, one in either Clallam County or Jefferson County, and one in Stevens County. These shooting sites will provide safe locations for responsible target shooters to engage in their activity at the Department of Natural Resources lands.

(\$1.9 million bonds)