

# Beyond 2013 – A Transformation Strategy

## Strategic Analysis of State Parks System Finance and Programs

Using the document “State Parks Strategic Alternatives Analysis” as a guide, at meetings held throughout eastern Washington the public provided their thoughts about financing and program changes for our state park system below. You can provide your thoughts through E-mail to the Washington State Parks planning team at [Strategic.Planning@parks.wa.gov](mailto:Strategic.Planning@parks.wa.gov).

Name of Park: Statewide significant comments from eastern Washington public meetings.						
Name of Commenter (optional):						
	Theme 1: Parks as an Enterprise		Theme 2: Parks as a Community Non-Profit		Theme 3: Parks as a Public Asset	
Key Question	Why would people and private companies choose state parks?		Why would non-profit organizations and other governments partner with state parks?		Why would state government invest in state parks?	
	Program	Financing	Program	Financing	Program	Financing
General Description	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasize opportunities to donate to state parks. 1) Discover pass, 2) \$5 license donation, 3) commemorative license plates, 4) joining local foundation.</li> <li>Closely monitor enterprise opportunities to make sure they do not overwhelm and permanently alter the uniqueness of state parks – don’t convert to “amusement” parks.</li> <li>Create and promote a state parks brand – “Washington State Parks – <u>“beautiful by nature”</u>”</li> <li>Better education about discover pass.</li> <li>Destination Resorts/Commercial: bike park, zip line tours; adventure parks; and paint ball.</li> <li>Adventure park: zip line parks and paint ball parks.</li> <li>Treating parks as an enterprise: For-profit</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License tab stick-on: like the year available for the plate @ vehicle license time, renewable discover pass.</li> <li>No office visit.</li> <li>Discover Pass – basic entry fee. Establish reasonable use fees. Hike on trail – INCL with pass.</li> <li>Boat launch - ?\$ Canoe/Kayak - \$5 Steptoe Butte - \$5 By honor system? Envelopes or smart phone# at use area.</li> <li>Stop including Sno-park pass with snowmobile registrations.</li> <li>How much revenue is raised with the Discover Pass?</li> <li>Could you limit the type of enterprise activity money making in a way that would allow the park system to stay true to its vision?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community non-profit – partner with other state and county plus metro (public) organizations rather than specific ‘user’ groups to minimize conflicts/domination of user groups.</li> <li>Parks as non-profit – This is unsustainable. Non-profits could not raise enough money to ensure the integrity of the parks. Resources would be stolen (wildlife poached, trees cut: due to lack of personal and enforcement presence, professionals with definite KSA’s would not be hired to run the parks.</li> <li>Partnership with businesses, non-profits, local government would be essentially in all models even up to co-owning and managing parks and programs.</li> <li>Will partners be there to help us tell our story?</li> <li>If legislature does not fund with general fund, then the state needs to look at parks being divested to county, friends groups, etc.</li> <li>Experience as Friends of Lime Kiln Society (F.O.L.K.S) has been frustrating as far as patience. The process took too long. Sometimes wish State Parks would just “get out of our way” so we could serve the public.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Already available in the community as partners. Mountain bike groups, horse backing, hiking, and Frisbee golf.</li> <li>Increase visibility of state parks through voluntary media coverage to increase sales of Discover Passes. Public TV program coverage of state park site (e.g., Northwest profiles in Spokane).</li> <li>General category comment for non-profits: limited. Non-profits may not be near more rural parks.</li> <li>Non-profits are hard to control.</li> <li>Discover pass alternative for special events and sporting venues.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring in partners or local mountain bike groups to improve trails/expand network in Riverside This could bring in more events at this location.</li> <li>Parks are public domain and are intended to preserve natural gems and provide people with access to experience their beauty. They do not exist for profit or for manipulation to provide for new hobbies. Altering their landscapes for horses, ski resorts, ATVs, snowmobiling is in direct opposition to preservation of nature.</li> <li>Share payment (taxes) and retention in government hands is the only safety net for parks.</li> <li>All themes depend on the Discover Pass which likely won’t work. Need to raise tax revenue theme.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the Discover Pass revenue expected to cover cost of State Parks budget? If not, what percent?</li> <li>Tourism – financial benefit to the State due to out-of-state visitors.</li> <li>Track and award money to state parks accordingly.</li> </ol>

	<p>enterprises always lead to a degradation of the resources. Allowing private vendors to operate in or run parks will be at the loss to habitat, wildlife and preservation of the visitors and native experience.</p> <p>8. Mt Spokane ski resort is perfect example of for-profit enterprise destroying the resource. They are expanding runs onto the remote side of the mountain, destroying the last remnants of old growth, pika habitat and wetlands. These are rare and valuable habitat that will never exist again once the resort expands.</p> <p>9. Has anything been learned from other states going through funding shortfalls? Other themes may be possible.</p> <p>10. Parks that can be made self-sufficient to theme 1. Those that can't go to theme 3...if significant resources. Otherwise sell for income or go to theme 2, if possible.</p> <p>11. Would there be a trial for each program (2-3 yrs.) to determine whether or not it can be self-supporting?</p> <p>12. Going to have to think as an enterprise or won't survive.</p>					
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Camping	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase services at campgrounds and charge more. People like conveniences.</li> <li>2. Camping cabins: investigate additional opportunities. Very popular.</li> <li>3. Private companies can and do share your overall mission when operating like facilities.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Market State Parks: site specific opportunities to bring events to parks generates revenue.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Reduce some older, less used campgrounds – improve, expand newer well used ones. Pass programs could be reduced – i.e., charge a little more.</li> <li>3. In some parks camping is a distinction people would expect to pay for camping.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pass programs need to be picked up by other than state or eliminated. The number of visitors being exempted or given discounts is too high and those who still want to use parks need to pay.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Percentage of parks visitors who camp is not as relevant as percentage of money that come from camping.</li> <li>3. Foundations can help with grants for volunteer workers; building trails, etc.</li> </ol>	
Indoor Accommodations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More yurts for alternative camping.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Allow more businesses to set up in state parks. Example – a state park in the Upper Peninsula has a very tasteful restaurant and brewery on site next to trails to several waterfalls.</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Indoor accommodation – T-2</li> </ol>		
General Day Use Activities (e.g., picnicking, hiking, biking, informal field games)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enterprise with boating docks, private, accommodations, special events and camping.</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Open up the park to events. Example: adventure races, bike races, endurance races.</li> <li>2. Non-profit partner heavily with Washington Trails Associations to mountain trails.</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parks as people asset – Why not place general day use activities in parks as a public asset? i.e., keep general day use “free.”</li> <li>2. Avoid radical changes to the existing system. Some arrangements – when it fits with non-profits could be advisable. Otherwise, cut back and hold on. This economic downturn is temporary. Consider 1) agreements with non-profits, 2) volunteer networks. Avoid long term responses to short term problems.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Day Use T-3 and discover pass.</li> </ol>
Beach Activities/ Swimming	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Beach improved facilities.</li> <li>2. Grants will become a major source of income.</li> <li>3. Slash parks with accompanying use fee would raise revenue and could increase use of other resource</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State Parks should explore ways to work closer with other community Organizations to generate more recreational opportunities and other attractions for the parks.</li> </ol>				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Beach improved – T-3 discover pass.</li> <li>2. Basic services – trail, picnic should be available for free (supported by taxes).</li> </ol>

	activities (like camping) to raise these revenues.					
Marine Recreation/ Boating	1. Marine improved. 2. Marine Rec/boating: enterprise – sell gas, ice, etc. for power boating.					
Interpretation/ Education	1. New assets like the Confluence Project of maia Lein need to be advertised and more “tour” programs. Set up to take advantage of a world famous artist work in our state.		2. Educational – partner with public and private institutions by providing access in return for maintenance and parking, construction.	1. These programs are important to locals as well as tourist.		2. Interpretation/education – T-3 and grants 3. Increase usage and dependence on signage for interpretive displays to save staff resources and so “open” longer hours. 4. There should be a campaign to increase state funding to at least 50% - during the recession.
	<b>Theme 1: Parks as an Enterprise</b>		<b>Theme 2: Parks as a Community Non-Profit</b>		<b>Theme 3: Parks as a Public Asset</b>	
Natural Systems Stewardship	1. Much as I love our historic resources, it might be time to eliminate them from our mission.			1. Would the cost of all this volunteer coordination equal the program savings? 2. Prefer this theme.		3. Natural Stewardship – T-3 grants 2. Challenge the state to fulfill its responsibility for natural system. Stewardship outside of State Parks operational budget.
Historic Preservation		1. After reading 2 sheets of planning, it all sounds great. Can you rev-up more volume for all the different categories? There are people like me that can handle horses, boats and first aid and hiking.		1. This resource would best be funded here – perhaps through partnerships with local groups or historical societies.	2. Cultural, natural and archeological preservation should be funded by the general taxes.	3. Historic – T-3 grants 4. Challenge the state to fulfill its responsibility for historic preservation outside of the State Parks operational budget.

Pre-Historic Archeological Protection				1. Prefer this theme.		2. Pre-historic T-3 grants 3. Challenge the state to fulfill its responsibility for historic preservation of pre-historic, archeological resources outside of the State Parks operational budget.
Winter Recreation	1. Winter rec. improved – T-1 2. How would road plowing and maintenance be covered?	1. The ski area on Mt. Spokane is poorly run and should have more state oversight & better marketing and operations would increase revenue.				Winter Rec. improved T-3 and grants.
Special Events	1. Special Events – T-1					
Park Commerce	1. Park Commerce – T-1 2. Park Comm.: #2 → learning #1 3. I do not want our parks to look and feel like general souvenirs and trinket commercialism. 4. Concessionaires such as tours should be a market value.					
Visitor Safety and Law Enforcement				1. Support friends and foundation groups for grants and volunteers. Do not hinder progress by these organizations.	1. Where the Discover pass waivers are provided – foster parents, elderly, etc., should be funded by tax base rather than user fees.	Safety and Law Enforcement T-3
Other (within three themes)						

Other (outside of Theme Approach)

1. State Parks are going to change – State management must change also.
2. A one size fits all strategy for 117 parks is not feasible – some parks should be treated as public assets, most as Con. Non-profits, none or few as enterprises.
3. Conduct educational events on a fee basis as the Institute for Extended Learning (IEL) does now with continuing ed.
4. Plan identification, birds, guided tours of park trails, river trips, horseback rides.
5. When a facility is closed and unpatrolled, what keeps it from being used anyway?
6. Marketing/Advertising – so many Washingtonians do not even know of our parks – more discover passes sold and broaden the base for public support with more visitors.
7. Charge commercial vendors more.
8. Mothball parks with low attendance until economic conditions improve.
9. Funding for parks shouldn't come primarily from the Discover Pass and should draw from taxes and donations.
10. If parks becomes more of an enterprise will some parks be closed to the public or be less accessible and will an increase in use fees turn people away?
11. John Muir was right – in nature we find our sanity – do not sacrifice this – his vision is timeless!
12. State parks are meant to be used – not looked at. That is what wilderness areas are for.
13. Check with DOL to be able to buy a parks license plate when you buy a car or a new recreational vehicle.
14. Discover Pass stickers with bar codes; rangers scan code on pass, checks to get money from users.
15. Put distinct QR codes on each Discover Pass for rangers to scan in order to tell where it's being used.
16. How does the National Parks do it?
17. Merge natural resource agencies: Parks, DNR and F&W. Merge agencies: Parks, Historic Preservation and Arts.
18. Control of patrons could be more difficult.
19. Discover pass is mentioned 20 times in the themes – 100% of cost; 7 times borne by user groups and grants and only 5 times taxes mentioned.
20. Enterprise- sad to see parks considering this – parks do perform a public service function. To not be able to go to a park because of cost is tragic.
21. Parks are core to public values – we have to hold onto some bit of tax revenue in order to hold onto the property that the public owns. When people go to parks they talk, they talk about things that they have in common. They get to the core of common values.
22. If we are forced to let go of general tax funding, it will be harder to get it back.
23. (Staff) Sometimes we say apologetically that we are not as important as feeding children. We should always be stating that we are fighting for the public good.
24. (Staff) Are we ever going to get the point that we are going to close parks? We say we are not going to close parks. Are we going to get there at some point? We need to make sure the legislature understands this is a possibility.
25. As a member of the public I have been using parks my whole life. I don't think that the public has been educated about the Discover Pass. Right now people think the money goes to support bureaucrats in Olympia. Parks needs signs that explain that the “funds from the Discover Pass keep these parks open.”
26. We need interpretive signs to explain to people what the funds are used for.
27. For far more than a decade National Parks have been charging an entrance fee. This is another argument for the Discover Pass.
28. We need to have the legislature provide even 1% of general funds to keep State Parks as a state legacy. (Mentioned the example of the Postal Service getting a subsidy from Federal Gov't for certain uncompensated services). Every taxpayer in the state needs to understand that they need to support this legacy system.
29. Are there free or reduced price Discover Passes available to limited income people?
30. A paid volunteer coordinator is the way to keep a volunteer program sustainable.
31. (Staff) I have not heard that the Commission is fighting to get the general fund support back. This was good for me to hear that you are fighting for it.