

# Manage Impacts to State Lands



**2023-25 Funding Request**

**\$1.3 million**



**Impacts from recreation, coupled with stressors, such as climate change, weed infestation, and land development adjacent to public lands require data for adaptive management to ensure outdoor spaces for recreation and conservation will endure into the future.**

To make informed and adaptive management decisions on WDFW-managed lands, credible data on how human activities affect the integrity of ecosystems needs to be collected, monitored, and evaluated. Washington treaty tribes have also expressed concern about the growing impact of outdoor recreation on habitat and wildlife and have asked public managers to collaborate in addressing this growing threat.

**In collaboration with State parks and DNR, WDFW proposes to:**

- Refine the Ecological Integrity Assessment (EIA) for use across ecosystem types,
- Customize the EIA methodology for measuring and monitoring recreation impacts,
- ID target areas for applying Ecological Integrity Monitoring (EIM),
- Hire staff to conduct EIA's across WDFW-managed lands, and
- Implement the monitoring framework beginning in target areas.

This will improve management of WDFW-managed lands and increase the transparency of WDFW management decisions for tribal governments, partners, lawmakers, and the general public.

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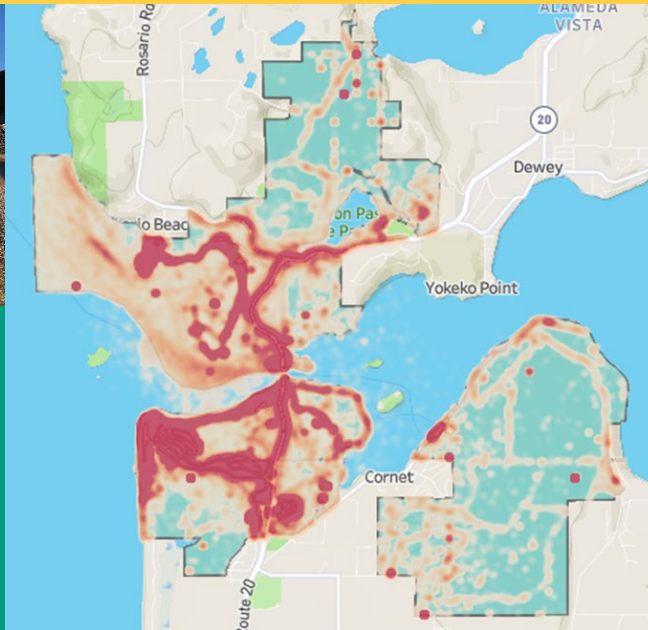
Hiking in Columbian Basin Wildlife Area. Photo credit: Janet Anthony.

## About Ecological Inventory Assessment

An ecological inventory assessment (EIA) measures the ecological integrity of a site through a standardized and repeatable assessment of current conditions compared to those associated with "healthy" areas

It addresses a number of objectives including:

- Assessment of ecological integrity on a fixed, objective scale;
- Comparison of ecological integrity of various occurrences of the same ecological systems;
- Determination of, and support for, conservation priorities;
- Improved decisions on monitoring individual ecological attributes; and
- Provision of an aggregated index of integrity to interpret monitoring data.



WDFW can track visitation patterns to prioritize high use areas around the state and build capacity to identify and address recreation impacts on WDFW-managed lands.

### Refine the EIA

WDFW will partner with the Washington Department of Natural Resources' Natural Heritage Program (WHNP) to refine the methodology for EIA across ecological system types, including wetland, riparian, shrubsteppe, and forested habitats.

### Customize the EIA

WDFW will review the literature and confer with partners and tribal governments to identify recreation impacts of greatest conservation concern and work with WHNP to tailor EIA to measure and monitor for those impacts.

### Identify Target Areas

WDFW will coordinate with tribal co-managers, DNR, and State Parks to prioritize geographic areas for assessment. Priority areas may include high value conservation areas with a concentration of human stressors, including recreation.

### Build Capacity

Once the EIA methodology is in place and areas are targeted for measurement and monitoring, WDFW will contract WHNP to conduct in-office and in-the-field training for fish and wildlife biologists to perform the monitoring.

### Implementation

Implementation will include collecting, managing, and analyzing data. WDFW will also develop a process for responding to data demonstrating a need for more or less on-the-ground management. This will contribute to successful planning and adaptive land management.

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