



Invest in Land Stewardship

2025-27 Budget Decision Package

This package addresses WDFW's most urgent land stewardship needs and builds capacity for conservation and recreation developments on 1 million-plus acres across the state. \$9.9 million in biennium 2025-27, with an ongoing investment of \$13 million per biennium, will be allocated across three identified elements.



1 Addressing Urgent Land Stewardship Needs

- Manage invasive weeds
- Support understaffed wildlife areas
- Improve Real Estate portfolio management
- Update management plans to reflect changing conditions
- Perform newly mandated cultural resources reviews



2 Responding to Increased Recreation Demand

- Maintain popular Water Access Areas
- Regulate recreation use
- Develop recreation plans
- Deliver local recreation projects



3 Building Tools, Methods, and Partnerships for Long-term Stewardship

- Facilitate working relationships with tribes and other state partners
- Measure & monitor ecological health
- Measure & monitor recreation use
- Develop a more vigorous estimate of the true cost of land stewardship

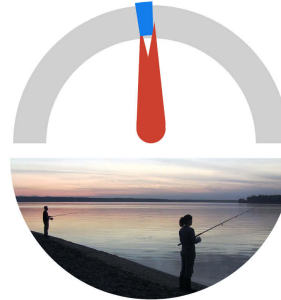


Element 1: Addressing Urgent Stewardship Needs (~\$6 million)

Wildlife Areas operating at 16-40% of need



Water Access Areas operating at 47-51% of need



Manage invasive weeds

Invasive weeds are a constant and growing threat to natural and cultural resources. WDFW will add statewide and regional capacity to reduce the impact of noxious weeds on WDFW-managed lands and neighboring properties.

Workforce (18.2 FTEs total)

4.0 FTEs
\$444k contracted services

Support understaffed wildlife areas

The health and function of the Department's 33 wildlife areas depend on frontline staff to engage with the public and local and regional partners; advance resource restoration efforts; and maintain equipment and infrastructure. WDFW will augment staffing in severely understaffed areas and contract funding to repair critical infrastructure.

8.5 FTEs

Improve Real Estate portfolio management

The growth of WDFW's real estate portfolio and associated asset management responsibilities has outpaced our capacity. WDFW will retain and grow capacity to meet expanded Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT), property management, and permitting needs.

3.7 FTEs

Update management plans to reflect changing conditions

Wildlife area plans guide local stewardship efforts to maximize benefits to fish, wildlife, habitat and the public. WDFW will add a planner to allow for more frequent plan updates that adapt to changing environmental and economic conditions.

1.0 FTE

Perform mandated cultural resource reviews

WDFW cannot meet its cultural resource review obligations without a 25% increase in staffing.

1.0 FTE

Element 2: Responding to Increased Recreation Demand (~\$2 million)

Maintain popular water access areas

WDFW water access areas provide boating and other recreation access to lakes, streams, rivers and marine areas. We will add capacity at heavily used locations in Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, and Okanogan counties to remove trash and graffiti, clean restrooms, and perform other maintenance duties.

Workforce (6.4 FTEs total)

2.0 FTEs

Regulate recreation use

State and area-specific rules developed with input from partners and the public help protect public safety and reduce the risk of damage to natural and cultural resources. WDFW will enact statewide rules to protect elk and streams and develop area-specific rules to respond to specific concerns identified in local wildlife, water access, and recreation management plans.

2.0 FTEs

Develop recreation plans

Increased visitation and diversifying use of department-managed lands requires a new level of planning to address the rising demand, reduce conflicts, and improve access for historically underserved groups. Recreation and/or travel management plans will address conservation and recreation needs in four wildlife areas statewide and 125 water access areas in region 4 (North Puget Sound).

2.0 FTEs

Deliver local recreation projects

Local improvements to recreation facilities and infrastructure will improve recreation experiences and reduce pressure on undermaintained areas. WDFW will address the deteriorated condition of local roads and trails and install interpretive and informational signage at key entry points. Additionally, educational programs will promote safe and responsible recreation.

0.4 FTE

\$750k for partnership agreements



Element 3: Building Tools, Methods, and Partnerships for Long-term Stewardship (~\$ 2 million)



Facilitate working relationships with tribes and other state partners *

Workforce (5.0 FTEs)

WDFW is working with Washington tribes and other state agencies to assess and improve management of recreation impacts across state-managed lands and waters. This ongoing work includes the cooperative development of standardized resource assessment and adaptive management methodologies.

1.0 FTE

Measure and monitor ecological health*

To inform near-term and long-term stewardship efforts, WDFW is working with DNR, State Parks, Washington tribes, and other partners to develop an ecological integrity framework applicable to Washington state-managed lands with guidelines for the efficient collection, management, and analysis of data. WDFW will work with partners to further develop and test the framework.

4.0 FTEs

Measure and monitor recreation use*

Understanding where and how many people are visiting department lands is critical for informing decisions about where and when to invest in local recreation facilities. In partnership with DNR, State Parks, and Earth Economics, WDFW will refine our model to estimate and analyze visitation to state lands.

\$250k visitor use data

Develop a more vigorous estimate of the true cost of land stewardship

In partnership with Washington Sea Grant and the University of Washington, WDFW will create a clear and reliable method to determine the true cost of stewarding our land portfolio, ensuring alignment with our conservation and recreation values, mandate, and funding requirements.

\$200k one-time contracted services



*Element of Joint State-Tribal Recreation Impacts Initiative budget request

The Sacred Sites Totem Pole gifted to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center by the House of Tears Carvers of the Lummi Nation.

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