

Feds Listen to WA Outdoor Enthusiasts

Local News

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SEATTLE - Hundreds of people are expected at a public meeting Thursday night in Seattle, called to consider the future of the nation's land and water resources and how to protect them. As part of "America's Great Outdoors Initiative," representatives of the U.S. Interior and Agriculture departments and the Environmental Protection Agency will attend the meeting - and so will fishing guide Dave McCoy of Emerald Water Anglers, West Seattle. He fishes many Washington rivers and says he has seen their conditions worsen, from muddier water and fewer fish to lack of public access.

McCoy is hoping the feds will make improving these waters a priority.

"The feds bring a mix that's necessary to the issue, because they can at times counterbalance, to a degree, what might be happening locally with the powerful voices and wallets of state and regional - even county - governments."

Amy Kober, communications director for the national conservation group American Rivers, also believes better protection for waterways should be part of the initiative.

"One of the things that we're hoping the administration does with this initiative is designate more water trails and Wild and Scenic Rivers. That is a great way to protect clean water for our drinking supply - and also, of course, for recreation, for fish and wildlife."

At the first listening sessions in Montana, people said more land management decisions should be made at the local level; that the agencies should have stable funding sources to commit to conservation projects; and that prices in places like Yellowstone National Park are too steep for many families.

McCoy says he likes the idea of the initiative, and not just for his business.

"My four-year-old daughter can hopefully have and see, when she's in her 30s, all the same stuff that we have now - and in my hopes, have it be even in better shape than it is now."

The registration deadline for the Seattle meeting has passed, but there is also a website on which people can make comments and share favorite outdoor experiences: www.doi.gov.

The session will be held on Thursday, July 1, from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., at Franklin High School, 3013 S. Mount Baker Blvd., Seattle.