

## **"Go Outside and Play!" It's Great Outdoors Week in WA**

### **Local News**

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Posted on : August 19, 2011 at 7:28 am

Washingtonians don't have to wait until Labor Day weekend for an outdoor adventure. Saturday is the start of Great Outdoors Week, a celebration of the beauty and diversity of the state's public lands.

More than two-thirds of Americans use public lands for camping, climbing, fishing and more, according to the *Washington Wilderness Coalition*, but that means one-third still need an introduction. This is the week to get it, says Sarah Krueger, conservation manager for *The Mountaineers*.

"It could be anything from attending an ice cream social with the Washington Wilderness Coalition, going on a long hike with The Mountaineers, or actually helping out and working on trails with *Washington Trails Association*."

Nearly 50 events are listed online at [wawild.org](http://wawild.org). Organizers say they'll be celebrating, but also informing people of what they call unprecedented efforts to roll back protections for public lands in Congress.

Washington motorists now pay from \$10 a day to \$35 a year for a "Discover Pass," for vehicle access to state parks and recreation sites. It's how the Legislature decided to fund management of these areas during the budget crisis. Krueger thinks it's encouraging that most feedback about the pass has been positive.

"I think the support that representatives received for passing the Discover Pass was kind-of a clear message that people in Washington really care about their public lands. They care about recreation, and it's a priority."

The Washington Wilderness Coalition says outdoor recreation is an almost \$12 billion business in the state and supports an estimated 115,000 jobs.

As an antidote to a weekend of chores or back-to-school shopping, getting outside might be just the prescription. Krueger says once you spend time outdoors, you might even make it part of your routine.

"I've always needed some time outside every once in a while, to kind of get grounded, think about what's important in life. And there's some great opportunities to spend quality time with your family."

Washington's Great Outdoors Week runs through Aug. 28. See the list of events at [wawild.org](http://wawild.org).