

State Parks Commission to Talk Revenue and Efficiency at Monthly Meeting

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - At its regular meeting next week, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission will hear reports and updates on a variety of topics, including the State Parks budget, the Discover Pass, forest health and a progress report on a transformation strategy that includes partnerships and new ways of doing business for greater sustainability. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 9, in the Washington Department of Labor and Industries Auditorium, 7273 Linderson Way S.W., Tumwater. A full Commission meeting agenda is available online at www.parks.wa.gov/agency/commissionmeetings/. Time for public comment is provided at all regular meetings, which are scheduled six times a year at pre-determined locations around the state. In action items, the Commission will consider delegating to the State Parks director the authority to approve the sale of timber at Lake Easton State Park, following removal of approximately 100 trees due to native root rot fungi that has caused tree failure in some areas of the park. The downed timber will be available for sale, and proceeds from the sale will be reinvested into natural resource stewardship and related interpretive activities as recommended by staff.

The Commission also will consider a new policy that formally allows the agency to hold in reserve no less than two months of critical expenditures. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) requires agencies dependent upon raising revenue for their budget to maintain an emergency reserve fund. Previously, the Commission had an informal policy that set the agency's reserve fund level at three months' operating expenses. In the current biennium, State Parks revenues are coming in short of projections, necessitating staffing and program reductions now under way. The Commission had agreed at its December 2011 meeting to lower State Parks' minimum reserve fund to the OFM requirement of two months in order to mitigate the severity of the current budget reduction. In other business, the Commission will hear a progress report on a major initiative to change the way State Parks does business and become more financially sustainable over time. During the past 18 months, the agency partnership and planning program has been working on two major fronts to transform the agency's operations with explorations of new business and enterprise approaches. An agency Revenue and Efficiency Task Force has work groups of existing staff looking at reducing expenses and increasing revenues in five different functional areas: operational efficiencies; service-related fees; business and new enterprise; philanthropic support; and government grants and cooperative initiatives. As part of the initiative, a new Partnership program made up of existing employees is focusing on greater collaboration with the Washington State Parks Foundation, a non-profit foundation that supports state parks and programs through fundraising and other supportive activities. For more information about the Washington State Parks Foundation, visit www.wspf.org/. These efforts include expanding statewide volunteer programs; increasing the number and capacity of friends groups; improving coordination and success on grant requests; developing and strengthening interagency and non-profit partnerships; enhancing philanthropic fundraising; and securing sponsorships. The Commission also will hear reports on the Discover Pass, including revenues, refinements and progress on establishing marketing for the agency and pass; an environmental review process under way at Mount Spokane State Park in advance of possible Commission-approved expansion of the ski area at the park; a report on a

recently completed Seashore Conservation Line survey; 2011 employee satisfaction survey results and results of a Baldrige Assessment, an organization assessment tool used by the state for evaluating capacity and effectiveness. **Commission work session:** A Commission work session is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8, in the Moran Room at Washington State Parks Headquarters, 1111 Israel Road S.W., Tumwater. Work sessions are open to the public, however, no public testimony and no formal Commission action are taken. Work session topics include the agency's transformation strategy; implementation of the agency reduction plan; update on marketing; budget update; Discover Pass; sustainability efforts; trails; and a legislative update. For more information about the Discover Pass, visit www.DiscoverPass.wa.gov. For information about the state park system, visit www.parks.wa.gov.