

Natural Resources Policy

Protecting Washington State Parks' Natural Resources

A Comprehensive Natural Resource Management Policy

October 2015

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Introduction

It is the mission of the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (hereinafter, the “Commission” or “State Parks”) to “[protect] a diverse system of recreational, cultural, historical and natural sites”.ⁱ To this end, the Commission manages approximately 250,000 acres, which range from marine and near-shore habitats in the West to shrub-steppe and ponderosa pine forests in the East. The majority of the Washington State park system supports native plant and animal communities. Most of the ± 275 land parcels are expected to be classifiedⁱⁱ as Resource Recreationⁱⁱⁱ or as one of the natural areas classes (Natural Areas, Natural Forest Areas, or Natural Area Preserves), land-use classifications that afford a high degree of natural resources protection.

Washington is a very biologically diverse state, containing most major ecosystems found in the Western United States, including two found nowhere else in the world: the Olympic rainforest and the channeled scablands ecosystem. The rich variety of fauna and flora comprising these systems provides a foundation for our social history and our current economy and quality of life in Washington State. Unfortunately, rapid population growth and development in recent years are threatening to degrade the value and integrity of the State’s natural resources. State Parks has an active role to play in countering the effects of habitat fragmentation and loss by working with other public agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals to promote biodiversity protection both within the lands it manages and across the broader Washington landscape.^{iv}

At the same time, the State Parks system is comprised of many of the State’s most important cultural resources, including landscapes that contain both cultural and natural resources. Management of natural resources under these circumstances will be carried out in a manner that ensures that the significance of all resources are considered and appropriate levels of protection afforded to them. Extraordinary care must be taken to properly manage these sometimes non-conforming agendas in ways that preserve both natural and cultural values.

To advance State Parks’ efforts to protect and preserve the natural resources in its care, the Commission recently adopted a new vision that emphasizes the acquisition and management of lands supporting statewide and regionally significant natural resources.^v In addition, the agency is promoting a “commitment to stewardship that transmits high quality park assets to future generations” (core value), Model Stewardship Parks (Centennial Plan), a Resource Stewardship Certification Program for staff, and the 2003-2013 Strategic Plan to Conserve the Natural Resources of Washington State Parks^{vi}. Finally, State Parks is exploring the adoption of a stewardship vision statement,^{vii} to ensure that natural resources are protected by policies and procedures that are understood, accepted, and implemented throughout the agency.

The purpose of this Comprehensive Policy is to provide an over-arching natural resource policy for the agency. It reflects a review of all known and relevant state statutes found in the Revised Code of Washington (“RCW”), administrative rules from the Washington Administrative Code (“WAC”), Commission policies, Administrative (Director) policies, and agency procedures, directives, and memoranda that address the protection and management of natural resources on State Park properties. This policy also reflects a review of the natural resources policies used by

neighboring states' park agencies and by the National Park Service.viii Language from the latter was adapted and incorporated into many of the policy statements. This policy and its future implementing procedures seeks to capture current regulations and management guidelines, and to summarize the key points needed to promote the long-term protection and conservation of the natural resources in the agency's care. With institutional commitment and budgetary support, this policy will ensure the long-term protection of State Parks' natural resources.

A. Biodiversity Protection

1. Biological resources – general principles

State Parks will maintain native plants and animals (biodiversity) that currently occur, or seek to re-establish them where they historically occurred, within those park lands classified by the Commission as Resource Recreation Areas, Natural Areas, Natural Forest Areas, or Natural Area Preserves. When consistent with recreation use, cultural resources integrity, and other agency objectives, native plants and animals will also be preserved in lands classified as Recreation and Heritage Areas. Plants and animals refer to all five of the commonly recognized kingdoms of living things, and include such groups as flowering plants, ferns, mosses, lichens, algae, fungi, bacteria, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, insects, worms, crustaceans, and microscopic plants or animals. No natural objects or specimens shall be killed, collected, cut, picked or removed from any state park property except where specifically allowed or required by law or by rule of the Commission. Such acts are allowed only where a benefit to the resource or a legitimate recreational use or cultural resource function can be clearly demonstrated and Commission board approval is obtained.

In general, State Parks will adopt park resource preservation and development strategies, and use best management practices (BMP) to maintain the natural population fluctuations and processes that characterize the dynamics of individual plant and animal populations, groups of plant and animal populations, and migratory animal populations in parks. Specifically, State Parks will seek to maintain healthy plant and animal populations by:

1. preserving and restoring the natural abundances, diversities, dynamics, distributions, habitats, and behaviors of native plant and animal populations and the communities and ecosystems in which they occur;
2. restoring native plant and animal populations in parks when they have been extirpated by natural or human causes and there is adequate habitat for their successful reestablishment; and,
3. minimizing human impacts on native plant and animal populations, the communities and ecosystems they comprise, and the processes that sustain them.

State Parks will also work with other landowners to encourage the conservation of native plant and animal populations outside our parks, especially within Commission-adopted long-term park boundaries^{ix}.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.035, RCW 79A.05.165, RCW 79A.05.305, chapter 352-16 WAC, chapter 352-28 WAC, WAC 352-32-150

Supporting documents: Memoranda MOU 72-17

2. Sensitive species and habitats

State Parks will strive to identify, protect, and promote the recovery of all plant and animal species listed under the Endangered Species Act, or that have been identified by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (“WDFW”) or by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (“DNR”) – Natural Heritage Program (“Natural Heritage”) to be “species of concern.” Specifically, State Parks will endeavor to inventory, to monitor, to restore, and to maintain species of concern and their habitats, cooperating with other agencies and stakeholders to ensure that conservation initiatives benefit local and landscape-level recovery efforts.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.035, RCW 79A.05.305, chapter 352-28 WAC

Supporting documents: Directive O-83-4, MOU 77-3

3. Common native species and habitat

State Parks will preserve, promote, and protect all native species and their respective habitats in balance with the agency’s cultural resources protection and recreation objectives. Where native species are significantly impacted by regulations (*e.g.*, WAC 352-32-150 opens State Parks for the harvest of fish) or Commission-sanctioned actions (developments associated with approved park master plans, treatment of problem wildlife), efforts will be made to minimize and mitigate these impacts.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.035, RCW 79A.05.305, chapter 352-28 WAC, WAC 352-32-150

Supporting documents:

4. Non-invasive exotic species

State Parks will not allow exotic species to displace native species if displacement can be prevented. Non-invasive exotics will be limited to Recreation and Heritage classified areas, and to select Resource Recreation sites (*e.g.*, grazing and agriculture areas), where native species cannot achieve the desired management objectives and an approved agency management plan is in effect.

Guiding references: chapter 352-16 WAC

Supporting documents: Commission Policy 12-98-1

5. Plant and animal introduction

The introduction of plants or animals on lands of the State Park system is generally not compatible with the goals of protecting native plants and animals, their habitats, and naturally functioning ecosystems. However, the agency will consider the introduction of native plant and animal species in those instances where it appears possible to re-establish or restore native plant or animal populations by adding new individuals to existing depleted populations, or by reintroducing species once native to State Park property that have disappeared from their historical range. In select instances non-native species may be considered for introduction where they are deemed to serve a significant recreational or

ecosystem function without degrading native habitat quality. Species introduction should only occur where supported by adequate research, is part of an approved agency recovery plan, is done in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, DNR – Natural Heritage and / or WDFW, and is compatible with cultural resources protection and recreational objectives.

Guiding references: WAC 352-32-150

Supporting documents:

6. Pest species

State Parks will undertake an integrated pest management approach to reduce risks to the public, park resources, and the environment resulting from pests and their impacts. Decisions concerning whether or not to manage a pest or pest population will be influenced by the feasibility of success, whether the pest is of exotic or native origin, and whether it is invasive or non-invasive. Efforts will be made to control exotic pests where they:

1. interfere with native species and natural processes;
2. disrupt the genetic integrity of native species;
3. pose a threat to cultural resources or degrade the quality of cultural landscapes;
4. hamper park management;
5. pose a threat to public health and safety; or,
6. are required by law.

Efforts will be made to control native pests where they threaten:

1. plant or animal species of concern;
2. the ecological integrity of a site;
3. the historic integrity of cultural resources;
4. to degrade the quality of plants, animals, and facilities in developed areas;
5. to invade non-infested areas inside and outside a park; or,
6. public health and safety.

Guiding references: chapter 17.10 RCW, chapter 17.15 RCW, RCW 79A.05.020, RCW 79A.05.040

Supporting documents: Procedure 65-1, MOU 82-1, Directive 99-3

7. Restoration of native habitat

State Parks will strive to re-establish the native species, natural functions and processes in those parks where disturbance has led to their decline or extirpation. To identify the appropriateness of a restoration effort and increase its chances of success, the following criteria should be satisfied prior to the initiation of restoration activities:

1. the activity will not significantly impair the function of an area designated by the Commission as Recreation or Heritage;
2. adequate habitat exists in a park (with or without restoration assistance) or on adjacent landownership to support a sustainable population;

3. the species to be re-established does not pose a serious threat to park visitors, resources, or facilities;
4. the collection of individuals from native populations, for use in the restoration activities, do not compromise the integrity of the populations from which the collection occurred;
5. the introduced genotype is compatible with the historic genotype; and,
6. reintroduction of rare species will take place in consultation with WDFW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and DNR - Natural Heritage.

Habitats disturbed by natural phenomena will be allowed to recover naturally unless intervention is deemed necessary to protect significant habitat, cultural resources, or park facilities; to prevent non-native invasions; or to provide visitor safety.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.305, chapter 352-28 WAC

Supporting documents:

8. Natural succession

Natural succession reflects the cumulative changes in plant and animal communities occupying a given area in response to natural processes and external forces. State Parks will manage lands in its care to restore and perpetuate natural succession in undeveloped areas of the park system, by scientifically evaluating disturbance events acting on State Park landscapes (frequency, intensity, patch size). Should conditions exist in a park where the natural evolution of one or more ecological communities appears to be at risk, causing a loss or degradation of habitat, the agency will seek to:

1. re-introduce natural processes (*e.g.*, thin forest stands where historic fire suppression efforts have led to poor forest health, high wildfire risk, and loss of habitat);
2. restore seral stages of plant communities in areas that can no longer support desirable natural processes and functions (*e.g.*, promote old growth forest structure); and,
3. restore mosaics of successional stages across a park landscape where appropriate and feasible.

Exceptions may occur when a unit is managed to favor a particular seral stage identified in a natural resource management plan.

Guiding references:

Supporting documents:

9. Landscape-level habitats

State Parks recognizes that many native species utilize habitats that extend beyond the boundaries of the land the agency manages. Hence, State Parks will partner with interested stakeholders to advance the conservation of species, their habitat, and processes across the greater Washington and Pacific Northwest landscape. The Commission will designate long-term boundaries as a tool to help focus the agency's conservation efforts inside and outside current park ownership, and as an instrument to identify and to acquire new park properties identified by State and regional conservation initiatives.

Guiding references:

Supporting documents:

10. Wetlands

State Parks recognizes that rivers, streams, and wetlands within the lands it manages are part of larger watersheds, and as such, the agency will help to protect these habitats by minimizing functional impacts to them and the processes they perform. The agency will manage its wetlands from a watershed perspective, recognizing these areas as integral parts of larger, hydrological-ecological systems. State Parks will ensure its actions do not contribute to a net loss in the acreage or function of the State's wetlands.

State Parks will limit construction in, or impacts to, wetlands except where consistent with Commission-adopted park plans (e.g., land classifications, facilities concept plan, or park master plan); other Director or designee-approved plans (e.g., park management plan and resource specific management plan); or where necessary to provide access to a significant public interpretive or educational opportunity and conditions allow for mitigation of associated impacts.

The agency may enter into agreements with other public and private entities to complete wetland restoration or enhancement projects on agency-owned property, including those completed as compensatory mitigation for impacts to wetlands outside agency ownership. Proposals by private and public parties to mitigate off-site impacts to freshwater and marine shorelines, streams, rivers, and associated buffers within state parks must satisfy all requirements for wetland mitigation projects included in this section. Also, any agreement with a public or private entity to restore, enhance, or create wetlands on agency-owned property must comply with additional procedural safeguards included in the agency's Lands Manual.

State Parks may accept non-monetary value, such as land and other property interest, in lieu of cash as proceeds from agreements with other public and private entities for compensatory mitigation projects. State Parks will dedicate expenditure of cash proceeds to stewardship activities that interpret, protect, restore, enhance, and where appropriate create additional wetlands and other high-value natural systems on agency-owned lands.

Where lands are included as part of the non-monetary proceeds from compensatory mitigation, at a minimum the agency will seek lands that support or advance the proper

ecological function and integrity of wetlands or other high-value natural systems. Stewardship activities may include building agency expertise and capacity to delineate wetlands and identify wetland restoration and interpretation opportunities; secure funding from grants or through mitigation work; complete necessary planning, design, and permitting tasks; coordinate on-site construction and prescriptions; and monitor and maintain restoration sites to ensure their long-term success during the regulatory maintenance period and thereafter. Finally, State Parks will develop and use accounting methods providing the public the greatest possible assurance that expenditure of mitigation proceeds will be dedicated to these purposes.

State Parks will involve the public in formulating decisions about expenditure of mitigation proceeds or suitability of other non-monetary compensation as provided in the agency lands manual.

State Parks will prepare periodic reports to the State Parks and Recreation Commission that provide a thorough review of the success of wetland mitigation and restoration projects and an accounting of the expenditure of mitigation proceeds.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.035

Supporting documents: Making Mitigation Work, The Report of the Mitigation that Works Forum, Washington Dept. of Ecology, 2008

Selecting Wetland Mitigation Sites Using a Watershed Approach, Washington Dept. of Ecology Publication #09-06-032, 2009; WAC 463-62-050, Commission Action Item E-2, June 2010

B. Non-Biotic Resources

1. Water resources

State Parks will perpetuate surface waters and groundwaters as integral components of park aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems (including floodplains); will obtain, use, and protect water in accordance with legal standards; and will consume water in an efficient and frugal manner, especially in water-scarce areas.

State Parks will actively secure and protect its water rights (and review and challenge applications for water rights that may affect park resources), obtaining and using water in accordance with the law and sustainable practices that seek compatibility between park development and the surrounding natural environment. Park surface or ground water will be withdrawn for consumptive use only when such withdrawal is legal and absolutely necessary for the use and management of the park. To the fullest extent possible, all park water withdrawn for domestic or administrative uses will be returned to the park watershed system once it has been treated to legal standards and a degree that ensures that there will be no impairment of park resources or the surrounding environment.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.165, RCW 79A.05.305, chapter 352-11 WAC, chapter 352-16 WAC, chapter 352-150 WAC, chapter 352-75 WAC

Supporting documents: Directive O-72-8

2. Air quality

State Parks will promote air quality in its parks to preserve natural resources and systems, preserve cultural resources, and sustain visitor and staff health and enjoyment. Parks will comply with all Federal, State and local air quality control regulation, and where applicable, will work with neighbors to promote regional air quality.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.165, RCW 79A.05.305, chapter 352-11 WAC

Supporting documents:

3. Soil resources

Native soils support very diverse biotic communities and serve as the foundation for all terrestrial ecosystems. State Parks will actively seek to understand and preserve the soil resources in its parks, and prevent the unnatural erosion, physical removal, or contamination of the agency's soil resources.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.165, RCW 79A.05.305, chapter 352-11 WAC, chapter 352-16 WAC

Supporting documents: Commission Action Item E-4 September 6, 1996, MOU 75-4, MOU 80-1

4. Geologic resources

State Parks will preserve and protect geological resources (processes and features, including paleontological resources) as integral components of the natural systems by assessing the impacts of natural processes and human-related events on the geologic resources, by maintaining and restoring the integrity of existing geological resources, and by interpreting geologic resources for park visitors. Except where unacceptable risks threaten visitors, facilities, neighbors, or identified significant natural or cultural resources, natural geologic processes will be allowed to proceed unimpeded (*e.g.*, erosion, deposition, dune formation, overwash, inlet formation, and shoreline migration). The construction of recreational facilities will comply with local sensitive area regulations and Commission policy for the siting of facilities in geologically hazardous areas.

Mining is not permitted on any uplands, or within streams, waterways, lakes, tidelands, or beaches within the boundaries of any state park or the Seashore Conservation Area, except as authorized by the Commission.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.165, RCW 79A.05.305, RCW 79A.05.600, chapter 352-16 WAC, WAC 352-32-085, WAC 352-32-235

Supporting documents: Commission Policy 65-70-1 ("Climbing in State Parks"), Commission Action Item F-14 October 9, 2003, MOU 75-4, MOU 80-1

C. Disturbance Events

1. Wildfire

State Parks manages many areas where wildland fire is a natural component of the ecosystem. These fires may contribute to or hinder the achievement of park management objectives. Human-ignited fires often cause destruction of park resources. Park fire management programs must be prepared to address individual park resource risks and management objectives (including the use of prescribed fire), while ensuring that firefighter and public safety are not compromised. In the absence of a Director (or designee)-approved fire management plan, park staff will develop an emergency fire response plan that focuses on the suppression of all human-ignited and naturally occurring wildland fires, taking into consideration park resources and values to be protected, firefighter and public safety, and costs. Suppression efforts will utilize BMP designed to minimize impacts to the resources of the park.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.165

Supporting documents: Procedure 65-301, Directive O-79-3

2. Catastrophic disturbance events

Areas disturbed by natural phenomena, such as landslides, earthquakes, floods, and fires will be allowed to recover naturally unless restoration efforts are deemed essential to:

1. mitigate excessive disturbance caused by past human activities (*e.g.*, excessive erosion resulting from the wash-out of an abandoned road culvert following a storm event);
2. advance natural succession where it might otherwise be retarded by unnatural process (*e.g.*, excessive exotics colonizing the disturbed area); or,
3. protect significant natural, cultural, or recreational park resources and / or the safety of park visitors.

Areas disturbed by human-induced events, such as oil spills, fires, illegal cutting or construction, will be restored to their pre-disturbance condition or reclaimed to a land-use deemed compatible with the park's management goals.

Restoration and reclamation efforts will prioritize the use of soil and vegetation native to, or representative of, the disturbed area (including similar genetic pools). See "Restoration of native habitat" section above.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.035, chapter 352-28 WAC

Supporting documents: MOU 82-4

D. Resource Use

1. Recreational facilities / activities

State Parks has a mission of protecting resources of the system while providing for recreational use by the public. Given the need to balance these goals, State Parks' staff will carefully analyze on a system-wide and / or park specific basis the long-term impacts to natural processes and resources resulting from facilities development, concessionaire practices, and recreational uses. A Commission-approved land classification will be developed for all parks to preserve the integrity of significant natural resources through the identification of appropriate recreation uses and developments. New developments will seek to minimize the impact of recreational activities to the natural resources of a park. Where existing recreational developments or uses are believed to degrade natural resources of regional or statewide significance, or the overall experience of visitors to a park, the agency will collaborate with recognized authorities in governmental and non-governmental institutions to alleviate the impacts by limiting, removing, relocating, or mitigating the recreational activity. Habitat restoration efforts (including temporary or permanent closures and monitoring for results) and possible changes in land classification will be considered where resource values have been severely threatened or degraded by recreational use.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.165, RCW 79A.05.195, RCW 79A.05.335, RCW 79A.05.380, RCW 79A.05.600, RCW 79A.05.700, RCW 79A.05.725, RCW 79A.05.750, chapter 352-16 WAC, chapter 352-20 WAC, chapter 352-32 WAC, chapter 352-37 WAC, chapter 352-68 WAC, chapter 352-75 WAC

Supporting documents: Commission Policies 65-70-1 and 72-99-1, Agency policies 15-16 and 65-3, Procedures 65-701, Directive O-72-11

2. Cultural resources

State Parks has the complex mission of protecting the natural and cultural resources of the system while encouraging their recreational and scientific use by the public. No single resource consistently takes priority over others. Where a resource of national, statewide or regional significance occurs, its protection will take priority over other resource protection and use efforts. Where significant natural and cultural resources exist at a site or within a landscape, agency staff must protect the integrity of all significant resources. The management and protection of cultural resources will be consistent with the Commission's Cultural Resources Management Policy (September 1998 and amendments).

Guiding references:

Supporting documents: Commission Policies 12-98-1 and 50-62-1, Cultural Resources Management Policy (September 1998 and amendments)

3. Public harvest of plants and animals

The public may: (1) harvest select plant parts and fungi in non-Natural Area Preserve land classification areas for personal consumption only, except where restricted by the Commission or Director, and (2) take shellfish and fish in accordance with regulations and State Parks' agreements with WDFW and Federally-recognized tribal governments.

State Parks may seek to restrict fishing activities through WDFW when and where necessary to achieve conservation objectives outlined in a park's resource management plan or to otherwise protect park resources or public safety. In consultation with WDFW and DNR – Natural Heritage, the agency may encourage intensive harvesting of exotic species when deemed necessary to meet park management objectives.

In partnership with WDFW, State Parks may stock native or exotic animals for recreational harvesting purposes; however, only if such stocking will not significantly degrade park natural resources or processes (see Native plant and animal introduction section above). Stocking will never occur on any lands classified as Natural, Natural Forest, or Natural Area Preserve by the Commission.

The Director (or designee) may close, temporarily close, or condition the recreational harvesting of plants, fungi, or animals upon a finding that the activity is degrading or threatens to degrade the park's natural or cultural resources.

Guiding references: chapter 352-28 WAC, WAC 352-32-150

Supporting documents: MOU 72-17

4. Grazing and agriculture

Livestock grazing and agricultural practices are generally considered inappropriate uses of park lands except in select instances where the Commission deems such activities to serve an important park objective while demonstrating minimal natural resource impacts. The Commission grants approval of any new grazing and non-haying agricultural leases in State Parks, and approval will be granted only for the following objectives:

1. to provide surveillance;
2. to support an equestrian / pack animal concession;
3. to enhance wildlife habitat;
4. to recreate or preserve a historically significant land-use for interpretation to the public;
5. to reduce fuel loading for wildfire prevention and management;
6. to support scientific research (sustainable grazing, weed control); or,
7. to comply with a deed restriction.

Grazing is further limited to sites where it can be demonstrated that this activity will not degrade the natural resources of a park, or conflict with any species of concern, recreational use of the park, environmental regulations, or local deed restrictions or land use rights.

The Director (or designee) will set the lease conditions and may renew leases that comply with the Commission's approval criteria and do not extend the acreage beyond that granted by the Commission. A grazing / agricultural management plan addressing the Ecosystems Standards (RCW 79.13.600-620) will be completed and approved prior to the initiation of any new or renewed grazing or agricultural lease.

Hay-cutting activities in state parks are approved by the Director (or designee) at select sites

where these activities:

1. provide surveillance;
2. assist in the control of weeds and/or contribute to wildfire fuel load reductions;
3. enhance wildlife habitat;
4. recreate or preserve a historically significant land-use for interpretation to the public;
5. promote a recreational activity; or,
6. are required by deed restriction.

A resource management plan will be established for all new and renewed agricultural – related activities.

Guiding references: RCW 79.13.600-620

Supporting documents: Commission Action Item E-5 January 16, 1998, Procedure 65-302

5. Shade and forest trees

Significant trees (alive or dead) in state parks may be considered for felling when the activity is compatible with the Commission’s land classification system; does not interfere with a protected species; and does not impact significant culturally-modified trees as determined by the agency archeologist. In addition, significant trees are only to be felled if at least one of the following circumstances apply:

1. satisfies the definition of an emergency ‘hazard tree’;
2. occurs within the footprint of a Commission-approved capital improvement;
3. serves to provide for a specific habitat need (*e.g.*, to create coarse woody debris habitat in the stream channel of a Federally-listed salmonid species);
4. no longer serves a function in a developed landscape;
5. contributes to excessive wildfire fuel loads and is part of a approved forest health plan;
6. are located on a road or utility easement;
7. are identified for removal as part of a cultural resources management landscape treatment; or,
8. severely impacts a recreational facility (especially historic structures).

All significant trees slated for removal must be approved by the Director (or designee) with the exception of emergency hazard trees and exotic species invading native habitat. Agency staff may remove these trees without Director approval.

The cutting and/or removal of significant and emergency trees shall be done by park personnel, unless the personnel lack necessary expertise or resources. Trees identified as emergencies will be scheduled for immediate treatment. All emergency and significant trees requiring treatment, when feasible and justifiable, should be considered for pruning, crown reduction, target relocation, or similar practices in an effort to avoid tree cutting or removal. If trees are cut or removed by a contractor, park personnel shall provide on-site supervision to ensure that work and safety standards are met to prevent harm or damage to persons, trees, non-tree vegetation, soils, organic matter and other park resources. When feasible, equipment

shall be kept on existing roads and parking areas. Areas damaged during cutting or removal shall be restored.

Woody plant material and debris will be left in the park, except in non-‘Natural’ land classifications where it may be removed when demonstrated to be excess to the habitat needs of the park. In select instances, some wood material may be acceptable for removal from a Natural Area or Natural Forest Area following consultation with DNR – Natural Heritage and WDFW, the preparation of a mitigation plan, a public hearing, and Director approval (*e.g.*, reduction in wildfire fuel loads, forest health or old growth acceleration initiatives, reopening of balds). Where wood material is to be removed from a park, it will be done so by park personnel or by a contractor or a wood debris collection permit holder under the supervision of park staff.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.035, RCW 79A.05.090, RCW 79A.05.305, chapter 352-28 WAC, WAC 352-32-290

Supporting documents: Procedures 65-304 and 65-305, Directive O-82-3, MOU 77-8, MOU 81-1, MOU 84-1

6. Resource sales

The sale of natural resources associated with Commission owned or managed lands will be undertaken only where the sale:

1. will advance a Commission approved capital development;
2. is part of a resource conservation plan or interagency agreement approved by the Director (or designee); or,
is deemed by the Director (or designee) to advance agency stewardship goals.

All sales must be surplus to the Parks needs, compatible with land class uses, and pursuant to procedures approved by the Commission (see agency’s Lands Manual for procedural guidance when conducting sales).

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.035, RCW 79A.05.070, 352-28-010 WAC, 352-28-020 WAC

Supporting documents: Commission Action Item E-4, June 2010, State Parks’ Lands Manual, Section 10.1 – Natural Resources Sales

7. Managing Tree Risk in Developed Park Landscapes

One of State Parks’ principle purposes is to facilitate public enjoyment, appreciation, and interaction with the natural world. To this end the agency develops and operates recreational amenities (*e.g.*, campgrounds, picnic areas, and trails) while retaining as many natural features as possible. In managing risk of tree failure in these and other developed park landscapes, State Parks’ highest priority is to protect park visitors and staff from harm. To safeguard its financial assets, the agency will also take reasonable actions to effectively manage risk to personal property of park visitors and staff (*e.g.*, vehicles and recreational equipment) and park-related risk to real estate assets and personal property on adjacent lands.

Agency staff will assess tree risk in developed landscapes on a regular basis in concert with assessing risk associated with park facilities. Tree risk assessments will be conducted by

agency staff trained in assessing tree risk and using procedures outlined in the agency's Tree Risk Evaluation Form.

In making treatment decisions to reduce tree-related risk to acceptable levels, State Parks will consider: impacts on park natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources; adopted park plans and land classifications; impacts to park revenue and expenses; park conservation, historic, and social context; timing of treatments, and input from park stakeholders.

State Parks may enter into agreements with other public and private entities for tree risk reduction treatments including cutting and removing trees. Any cutting and removal of trees must be consistent with applicable federal, state, and local regulations, satisfy requirements for environmental review and permitting, and otherwise comply with Commission administrative rules and policies. The agency will dedicate expenditure of any net cash proceeds from the sale of timber removed as part of tree risk reduction treatments first to restoring trees and understory vegetation and repairing treatment-related damage to facilities in affected parks. Thereafter, remaining proceeds will be dedicated to natural resource stewardship activities and to related interpretation and public education activities. State Parks may accept sawn lumber or other wood products representing fair market value in lieu of cash for sale of timber as part of tree risk reduction treatments. Sawn lumber will only be accepted if it can be advantageously used first for park natural or cultural resource stewardship activities, related interpretation or public education purposes, and thereafter for general park purposes.

For purposes of this section, stewardship activities may include building agency expertise and capacity to assess and treat tree-risk, advance forest health, and secure grants for related activities; preparing tree risk reduction and forest health plans and treatment designs; conducting environmental review and securing permits; coordinating on-site treatments and prescriptions; and monitoring treatments to ensure their long-term success.

The agency will use all practical means to inform the public about pathogens, pests, or other non-biological impacts to tree and forest health requiring large-scale cutting and removal of trees from developed park landscapes. Agency staff will hold a public meeting near affected parks and will consider public input when making treatment decisions with the potential to disrupt significant park activities either temporarily or permanently.

Agency staff will prepare periodic reports to the Commission on tree risk reduction efforts and an accounting of the expenditure or use of cash and in-kind proceeds of timber sales.

E. Planning

1. Land classification

The Commission’s 1995 land classification system provides management guidance for appropriate use and development intensities in specific areas of a park and the desired long-term boundary for that park parcel. Areas of a park containing natural resources of regional or statewide significance, unusual and /or sensitive habitats (*e.g.*, bald eagles), or a species of concern should be classified restrictively to allow only low-intensity uses and minor facilities development. Typically, one of three natural area classifications should be applied to such areas (Natural Areas, Natural Forest Areas, or Natural Area Preserves), although the “Resource Recreation” classification also provides a relatively high degree of resource protection and may offer the best option to address conflicting use issues at a specific site.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.305, RCW 79A.05.335, RCW 79A.05.600, RCW 79A.05.700, RCW 79A.05.725, RCW 79A.05.750, chapter 352-16 WAC, chapter 352-28 WAC, WAC 352-32-010, WAC 352-32-095, WAC 352-32-15001

Supporting documents: Commission Policy 72-69-1 (Underwater Marine Parks), Procedure 72-1, Director’s 1995 Land Classification and Management Guidelines Matrix

2. Acquisition planning

Principal purposes of the State Park system include the protection, public access and appreciation of examples of Washington’s natural landscapes, including its biological and physical values. The agency will seek to acquire properties that represent natural resource values in under-protected ecological regions, under-protected habitat types statewide and unique natural resource areas, including locations of unusual speciation, areas supporting species of concern, wetlands and riparian areas, rare habitat types and physical features not represented on protected lands.

Guiding references:

Supporting documents:

3. Conservation planning

State Parks will strive to maintain the full range of native plant and animal populations indigenous to its lands, and their genetic types, by managing human interference with habitats and ecological processes. As conservation issues emerge, through formal planning efforts such as the Commission’s Classification and Management Planning process (“CAMP”) or the day-to-day interactions staff have with the natural resources in their care, the agency will seek to engage stakeholders in the development and implementation of natural resource plans designed to ensure the long-term protection of biodiversity within State Park properties and their environs. Prescriptions implemented in the plans will comply with all environmental regulations and be monitored and refined as necessary to ensure the resource issue is being adequately addressed.

Guiding references: chapter 352-16 WAC

Supporting documents: Commission approved Strategic Plan to Conserve the Natural Resources in Washington State Parks (Item F-6 March 2003)

4. Stakeholder involvement

State Parks will pursue opportunities (including the development of agreements) to improve natural resource management within parks and across administrative boundaries by cooperating with public agencies, Federally-recognized Tribes, non-governmental conservation organizations, and private landowners. In addition, the agency will seek the cooperation of others in minimizing the impacts of influences originating outside park properties, where such conditions threaten to degrade the quality of State Parks natural resources and the recreational opportunities they create.

Guiding references:

Supporting documents:

F. Regulatory Compliance

State Parks has a legal and ethical responsibility to comply with existing environmental regulations. Where appropriate, State Parks may choose to exceed these regulations and even promote new environmental regulations that ensure the long-term protection of both agency and State resources. All management plans and projects will be designed to comply with environmental regulations. Consistency with legal standards will be required for approval and implementation.

Guiding references: chapter 352-11 WAC (SEPA Procedures)

Supporting documents:

G. Staff Stewardship Training

State Parks recognizes that the effective stewardship of its natural resources requires a well-trained staff who is aware of the latest conservation biology theories and technologies; knowledgeable of environmental regulations, environmental education and interpretation; appreciative of cultural resources and their interaction with the natural environment; and sensitive to recreational impacts on natural resources. The agency will promote natural resource conservation training for all agency staff through employee orientation classes, the Resource Stewardship Certification Program, and make available a variety of advanced training opportunities (seminars, workshops, meetings, university courses) to park managers and agency resource specialists. The purpose of the training is to maintain effective coordination of natural resources management functions within the agency, to improve system-wide programs, and to provide updates on current trends in natural resources management.

Guiding references:

Supporting documents:

H. Interpretation and Education

State Parks recognizes that an informed public, knowledgeable of natural and cultural resource values and management issues, is well-positioned to assist the agency in the management and protection of its natural resources. The agency will strive to provide interpretive opportunities in all developed parks. Agency staff will work to integrate information on resource management, natural resource issues, and the composition and function of native habitats into interpretive and education programs, printed materials, and electronic media. In addition to informing park visitors, staff will seek to engage and educate neighbors and local officials in issues and approaches to eliminate threats confronting the natural resources of the park and its surrounding landscape.

Guiding references: RCW 79A.05.335, RCW 79A.05.340, RCW 79A.05.345

Supporting documents:

I. Research, Surveys, and Collections

1. Research permits

State Parks has an interest in and will encourage scientific investigations of the natural resources in its care, to better understand natural resource processes and features, and to best determine and assess appropriate management actions. All studies conducted by outside students and researchers will be subject to a "peer-review" scientific application permit process and require that the findings of the study be shared with agency staff in the form of a report, data, and / or a presentation.

Guiding references: chapter 352-28 WAC .

Supporting documents: Commission Policy 72-69-1 (Underwater Marine Parks), Administrative policy 15-8

2. Habitat assessment and monitoring

State Parks will inventory significant natural resources to provide a foundation of knowledge about their physical and biotic characteristics. This information will serve as a baseline against which to monitor long-term trends in composition, structure, population size, and function of these resources of interest. Findings from habitat assessments will aid park managers in determining the impacts of their management actions, and identify areas where these practices may be failing to achieve the desired resource conservation result.

Guiding references:

Supporting documents: Commission approved Strategic Plan to Conserve the Natural Resources in Washington State Parks (Item F-6 March 2003)

3. Natural resources database

A natural resources database will be developed in State Parks to maintain digital and paper copies of information and data regarding the agency's natural resources in a manner that is secure and readily usable by staff. Data may consist of numerical information from counts and measurement of park resources, narrative accounts of park resources, photographs, maps, or collections of voucher materials, and should conform to the agency's standards for data collection and management.

Guiding references:

Supporting documents:

Definitions

Best management practices (BMP): Practices that apply the most current means and technologies available to maintain a superior level of environmental performance and ecological integrity, and to comply with environmental regulations.

Biodiversity: The biological diversity in an environment as indicated by the taxonomic and genetic diversity, the variety of life forms present, the community structure, and the ecological roles performed.

Conservation: The protection, preservation, management, or restoration of living (plant and animal) and non-living (soil and water) natural resources.

Cultural resource: An aspect of a cultural system that is valued by or significantly representative of a culture or that contains significant information about a culture. A cultural resource may be tangible or intangible. Biotic cultural resources include both plant and animal communities. Non-biotic examples of cultural resources include landscapes, districts, sites, structures, buildings and objects (see State Parks Cultural Resources Management Policy September 1998, last amended August 2004).

Ecosystem: An ecological unit in nature formed by the interaction of a community of organisms with their physical environment.

Emergency hazard tree: A dead, dying, tipped, cracked, rotten, or otherwise defective tree that poses an imminent threat to people or property.

Exotic species: Species that are a foreign component of the native ecosystem(s) in a park, occupying or capable of occupying park lands as the result of deliberate or accidental human actions. Exotic species are commonly referred to as non-native, alien, non-indigenous, introduced, or invasive species. Exotic species can be either invasive or non-invasive.

Genotype: The genetic makeup of an organism or a group of organisms.

Geologically hazardous area: An area at moderate to high risk of experiencing natural hazards such as landslides, erosion, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and lahars.

Integrated pest management: A decision-making process and subsequent management application that coordinates knowledge of pest biology, the environment, and available technology to prevent unacceptable levels of pest damage, by cost-effective means, while posing the least possible risk to people, resources, and the environment.

Mature trees: Trees 90 years or older.

Mining: The act, process, or work of removing precious metals, minerals, or other natural materials from the earth.

Native species: Species that are indigenous to a particular area.

Old growth: Old growth forest communities have developed for 150 years or longer and commonly contain large old-growth trees, large snags, large downed logs, and large logs in streams.

Personal consumption: The consumption of a product by the person gathering or producing it. To be considered personally consumed, it may not be sold, given or bartered to another person.

Pests: Pests are living organisms that interfere with the purposes or management objectives of a specific site within a park. Pests can be native or exotic.

Preservation (of natural resources): Management designed to promote unencumbered natural processes and functions in an area, and the habitats they create for native species.

Reclamation (of natural resources): To reclaim a degraded environment to a productive condition or function (*e.g.*, natural habitat, agriculture lands, developed facilities).

Restoration (of natural resources): The process of assisting the recovery of a native species, community, or ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed.

Seral: One stage in a sequence of ecological communities successively occupying an area from the initial stage to the climax.

Significant trees: All old growth trees, mature trees, and younger trees of ten inches or greater diameter at four and one-half feet in height.

Significant(ly): Having or likely to have an important (usually quantifiable) effect.

Species of concern: Those species listed as State Endangered, State Threatened, State Sensitive, or State Candidate by WDFW (for animal species) and DNR - Natural Heritage (for plant species), as well as species listed or proposed for listing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the NOAA- Fisheries (National Marine Fisheries Service).

Sustainable: The conservation of a resource so as to maintain its quality / quantity over the long-term.

Undeveloped areas: Those areas of the park system that do not currently contain, nor are anticipated to contain, developed recreational facilities (areas classified Recreation Area or Heritage Area) or areas managed for a specific vegetation composition (*e.g.*, agricultural and grazing lands, historic landscapes).

Wetlands: Areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs

and similar areas. Lands adjacent to wetlands contribute to the integrity and proper functioning of wetlands.

ⁱ In its entirety, the Mission Statement of Washington State Parks states the following: “The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission acquires, operates, enhances, and protects a diverse system of recreational, cultural, historical and natural sites. The Commission fosters outdoor recreation and education statewide to provide enjoyment and enrichment for all, and a valued legacy to future generations.”

ⁱⁱ WAC 352-16 Naming of State Park Areas and the Land Classification System. NOTE: At this time the Commission has yet to classify inter-tidal and sub-tidal lands that the agency manages. The inter-tidal zone of the Seashore Conservation Area is managed in accordance with the regulations and stakeholder management plans identified in RCW 79A.05.600-695. All other inter-tidal and sub-tidal lands managed by the agency, with the exception of those supporting recreational developments or shellfish harvests, should be considered *de facto* ‘natural areas’, and managed following the basic guidelines outlined in the Director’s Land Classification Matrix (identified in WAC 352-16-030) until such time as the Commission has specified a specific land classification (or classifications) for these marine environments.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Resource Recreation land class, as defined in the Director’s 1995 Land Classification Matrix, describes areas that “are suited and/or developed for natural and/or cultural resource-based medium- and low-intensity recreational use. [They] are sites where the high quality of a particular natural or cultural resource or set of such resources is the lure for human recreation. Thus, the rationale for recreation is based on the value of attractive natural or cultural resources. Management of these areas must stress the centrality of preserving the quality of the natural and cultural resources while allowing appropriate and sustainable levels of human use and enjoyment.” This land class is consider the ‘default’ classification for all terrestrial parcels in the park system unless these parcels have 1) historically been identified and managed for the protection of significant resources (*e.g.*, natural areas, historic sites), or 2) undergone significant development (*e.g.*, campgrounds, picnic areas).

^{iv} Executive Order No. 04-02 Establishing the Washington Biodiversity Council. The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission is an appointed member of this council. [NOTE: This Bill does not specifically direct Parks to work with other agencies on biodiversity as suggested by the text. I think a better use of the footnote, would be to explain what ESSB 6400 did do and that State Parks would like to partner with others who have worked on the Biodiversity strategy report, etc. I did not see any mention of state parks in the committee report from IAC]

^v In January 2003, the Commission adopted the following 10 year vision for the agency: “In 2013, Washington’s state parks will be premier destinations of uncommon quality, including state and regionally significant natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources that are outstanding for public experience, health, enjoyment and learning.” Commission Minutes of January 30, 2003, Agenda Item F-11, p. 46.

^{vi} Commission Minutes of March 20, 2003, Agenda Item F-6, pp. 48-52.

^{vii} A charter team at State Parks created the following stewardship vision in December 2002: “Stewardship is recognized in principle and practice; all agency staff see themselves as stewards. The agency maintains a comprehensive assessment of the cultural, natural, and recreational resources in the parks. It continuously identifies, studies, evaluates, interprets, and responsibly manages these assets. Resources are protected by policies and procedures that are understood, accepted, and implemented throughout the agency, from the individual behind the Director's desk to the park aide behind the weed eater. The public, as stakeholders and volunteers, are partners in ensuring the successful stewardship of park resources for future generations. Throughout the state, region, and nation, our peers and partners see us as an organization that is willing to lead and to learn.”

^{viii} National Park Service. 2001. 2001 Management Policies. www.nps.gov/refdesk/mp/index.html.

^{ix} The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission has historically adopted a long-term park boundary for all parks undergoing land classification as a part of the Classification and Management Planning (CAMP) process. This policy is expected to continue in the future for all parks subject to the CAMP process.

(CM December 2004, Revised August 2010, Revised October 2015)