

**WEEK 2 REPORT ON 2021 SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE & WEEK 3 HEARINGS  
For WRPA President, Executive Board, Executive Dir., Legislative Committee**

*Doug Levy – 1/25/2021*

***Don't Forget to Register For "Great Outdoors Day" (Thursday, Feb. 4) and our preview sessions with legislative and Capital Budget leaders in the House (Friday, Jan. 29) and Senate (Monday, Feb. 1)!***

*A last reminder that if you have not already registered for this year's virtual rendition of "Great Outdoors Day" co-sponsored by WRPA and our friends with the Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition (WWRC), you absolutely should! This Session, we are taking advantage of the virtual setup to offer you two preview Sessions – Friday, Jan. 29, from 8-9 a.m., and Monday, Feb. 1, from 8-9 a.m., where you can hear House and Senate leaders provide us with the lay of the land on the 2021-23 Capital Budget, the outlook ahead for our local parks funding options bills, and more. Here's the WRPA page link that will take you to free registration for the Jan. 29, Feb. 1, and Feb. 4 events ahead: [All Upcoming WRPA Events \(wrpatoday.org\)](http://wrpatoday.org)*

In Week 2, just as we saw the swearing-in of a new President in that "other Washington," we saw the State Legislature get down to (*virtual*) business in the Evergreen State. The week was marked by a flurry of Zoom-conducted public hearings, "early-action" budget and vaccine-response plans by the Senate and House, proposals for a significant infusion of new transportation revenue, and a pile of policing reform and housing and homelessness prevention bills. Oh, and although legislative leadership sent signals that there would be far fewer bills introduced in this Session than during regular ol' on-the-ground ones, we have still seen 700+ bills introduced by the two chambers.

As the week ended, both the Senate and House released their "early-action" budget proposals to push federal COVID-19 relief funding quickly out the door for vaccine distribution, business assistance, and emergency rental assistance, and more. Budget-writers have pledged to fast-track **SB 5343/HB 1367** and **SB 5344/HB 1368**, the bills to enable \$618 million for vaccine distribution, \$365 million for emergency rental assistance, \$240 million for business assistance, and \$26+ million for food assistance. Here are links to summaries of those early-action proposals:

[2019-20 Operating Budget -- SB 5344 Early Action Overview \(wa.gov\)](#)

[2019-20 Operating Budget -- HB 1367 and 1368 Summary \(wa.gov\)](#)

Additionally, I will note that the Governor's office has issued an adjusted vaccine distribution and phase-in schedule, along with releasing a "Phase Finder" tool designed to enable residents to understand where and how they fit in the queue. Links to Phase Finder, and a handy Association of Washington Cities' (AWC) write-up and linking of the updates, are here:

[Phase Finder / Encuentra Tu Fase \(findyourphasewa.org\)](http://findyourphasewa.org)

[COVID-19 vaccines in the workplace update \(wacities.org\)](http://wacities.org)

Other key happenings in Week 2 included the Tuesday release of an ambitious 16-year/\$26+ billion transportation investment proposal in the House, a series of new policing reform bills, and similarly, gobs of bills dealing with housing and homelessness.

We at WRPA can count Week 2 as a very successful one! There were positive hearings on our local parks funding options bills, legislators who stepped forward to sponsor our Capital Budget request for a statewide multi-modal trails database, and the introduction of a "Parks Rx" bill.

Below is an overview of where we stand on WRPA's 2021 Legislative Agenda priorities. I also have provided a rundown of other bills impacting local parks and recreation and/or outdoor recreation. A Week 3 hearings list is attached separately, with recommendations on where to testify, sign in, or simply monitor. I've color-coded it to show you where I recommend support (green highlight), some caution or concern (yellow highlight), or simply a need to track and monitor legislation (blue highlight).

### Top Priorities

#### **\*Provide Local Parks and Recreation Agencies with new Funding Options to Address Vital M&O and Preservation Needs which only became more challenging under COVID-19 – SB 5006/HB 1025**

*(Policy/Fiscal Bill)* In Week 2, we saw both the Senate Housing and Local Government and House Finance Committees hold hearings on our priority local funding options bills (**SB 5006/HB 1025**). First, a big shout-out to our prime sponsors for their excellent testimony – Sen. Kevin Van De Wege (D-Sequim/24<sup>th</sup> Dist.) and Reps. Emily Wicks (D-Everett/38<sup>th</sup> Dist.) and Carolyn Eslick (R-Sultan/39<sup>th</sup> Dist.), who testified together in a nice show of bi-partisanship. I also want to give big kudos to those from local parks who testified with me – Mary McCluskey of Poulsbo, Mike Farrell of Monroe, and Jill Meis of Lake Stevens. You were all terrific! We had very good lists of supporting organizations as well at both hearings, and no formal opposition. We are hoping to have our bills moved along the next step of the way soon.

#### **\*Actively participate in efforts to replace and recover lost revenue for parks and recreation agencies – while protecting existing resources**

*(Operating Budget)* We are staying attuned to potential opportunities for the Legislature to take steps that will help local parks with funding for COVID-19 recovery measures. Possible options include an adjustment to the 1 percent property tax cap, potential taxes and fees and “cap and invest” approaches on carbon reduction, and a proposal to establish a Capital Gains tax (**SB 5096**). It will be an enormous challenge to secure funding, particularly as the state's budget outlook improves, and with the likelihood that any new revenue sources in areas such as greenhouse gas reductions will be closely tied to revenue on things such as transportation. I met Friday with Senate Ways & Means Vice-Chair June Robinson (D-Everett/38<sup>th</sup> Dist.) and got the very real sense that the Senate's enthusiasm for adjusting the 1 percent property tax cap (it did so for four years in 2017, but only on the *state's* portion) is likely lukewarm at best.

#### **\*Actively promote a 2021-2023 Capital Budget with robust funding levels for key grant programs that significantly benefit parks and recreation and the Great Outdoors**

*(Capital Budget)* We are pushing for a robust level of investment in key outdoor recreation grant programs used by local parks agencies, especially the Washington Wildlife & Recreation Program (WWRP), the Youth Athletic Facilities program (YAF), and the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA). We appreciate the \$100 million, \$11.2 million, and \$9.1 million allocations in the Governor's Budget, which funds virtually all of the YAF and ALEA lists. We join the WWRC in asking for consideration of a \$140 million investment in WWRP. [A big shout-out here to Kent Parks and Recreation Director and Spokane County Parks and Recreation Director Doug Chase for delivering excellent testimony on these priorities to the Senate Ways & Means and House Capital Budget committees, respectively.](#)

#### **\*Protecting Property Tax-Based Parks Districts and MPDs from “Pro-Rationing” – HB 1034**

*(Policy Bill)* This legislation prime-sponsored by Rep. Joe Fitzgibbon (D-Burien/34<sup>th</sup> Dist.) is designed to prevent the ‘pro-rationing’ of the Vashon Parks District by removing their property tax allocation from the \$5.90 limit and shifting it to a 50-cent ‘gap’ part of the property tax. Vashon Parks Executive Director Elaine Ott-Rocheford did a nice job of testifying in strong support of this bill. We in WRPA signed in with *support*.

### **\*Protect Funding for Dedicated Accounts within the Capital Budget**

*(Capital Budget)* I'm pleased to share that the Governor's proposed 2021-23 Capital Budget does a good job of maintaining and funding dedicated outdoor recreation accounts. I want to note one are of the 2021-23 *Operating Budget*, way back in Sec. 961, where representatives of All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) and motorcycle associations are very concerned that Non-Highway Off Road Vehicle Account (NOVA) monies are being improperly diverted to the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR). DNR insists the provision in the budget does nothing more than continue to codify what already exists. We've urged all of those involved to get in a room and figure this one out.

### **\*Advocate for Key "Healthy & Active Communities" Funding within the State Budget Process**

*(Capital, Transportation, Operating Budgets)* Under WRPA's "healthy and sustainable communities" initiative, we work to support the following types of funding (see list below). I will share that in the Governor's proposed Operating Budget (**SB 5092/HB 1094**), an additional \$500,000 is allocated to the No Child Left Inside program run by State Parks. Additionally, see the Transportation package entry further down this report which identifies proposed levels of funding for key programs in the Transportation Budget.

- *Public Health District funding -- Operating Budget;*
- *Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant, Safe Routes to Schools, "Complete Streets" and fuel-tax-distribution funding in the Transportation Budget;*
- *"No Child Left Inside" within the Operating Budget;*
- *'Target Zero' programs run by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission;*
- *Dedicated accounts and grant programs in the Capital Budget such as WWRP, YAF, ALEA, NOVA, BFP.*

### **\*Support Legislation Promoting Parks and Wellness Connections with Public Health – SB 5292**

*(Policy Bill)* I'm pleased to report that WRPA and our friends at Metro Parks Tacoma worked with newly elected Sen. Twina Nobles (D-University Place/28<sup>th</sup> Dist.) on the introduction of **SB 5292**, the "Parks Rx" bill. **5292**, which is expected to be scheduled for hearing soon in the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee, is designed to parallel the wellness program and health insurance incentives used by the private sector – in this case through the prescribed use of public parks, spaces, trails, and facilities. The legislation does not mandate what a Parks Rx program should look like, rather that a collaboration occur among representatives of local parks, public and community health, health care providers, and insurance sector folks to design three pilot projects around the state. We're appreciative of early support for this initiative from REI, cities, Washington State Parks, and others. Stay tuned as we put together an outreach meeting in the next week and look to get this bill heard!

## **Support/Oppose Items**

### **\*Efforts to Address Mental Health, Homelessness, Affordable Housing**

*(Policy Bills, Budgetary Items)* Our Legislative Agenda notes that WRPA will support efforts led by cities and counties, the Low-Income Housing Alliance, and others, to ensure the Legislature continues to provide funding and tools for local governments to address growing mental health, homelessness, and affordable housing crises in their communities. Here are a number of bills we are tracking in this space, where there's no shortage of legislation and ideas:

- **HB 1277/SB 5279, providing an additional revenue source for eviction prevention and housing stability:** This legislation adds \$100 to the document recording fees paid on various housing and real estate transactions. The *extent* of the increase may be a challenge to enact, but the bill is designed to generate significant new revenue for rental assistance – since most of the new funding would be targeted towards that. The House bill is the 'vehicle' that is moving, having already

received a hearing and scheduled to move out of the House Housing, Human Services & Veterans Committee this coming Friday.

- **HB 1182/SB 5209**, setting up an effort to plan how to best use federal dollars for the new “988” crisis-response call line to be established in states such as ours. These companion bills sponsored by Rep. Tina Orwall (D-Des Moines/33<sup>rd</sup> Dist.) and Sen. Manka Dhingra (D-Redmond/45<sup>th</sup> Dist.) are up for hearing later this week.
- **HB 1157, increasing housing through density incentives:** New State Rep. Jessica Bateman (D-Olympia/22<sup>nd</sup> Dist.) is the prime sponsor of this bill scheduled for a Wednesday 10 a.m. hearing in House Local Government. The bill is some parts mandates, some parts incentives. The mandates include a requirement to plan for all “missing middle” housing types and to meet a net six (6) dwelling unit per acre density threshold. The incentives include authority to designate one or more Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) density incentive zones. [I'm interested in hearing back from professional Planning and Community Development folks on this.](#)
- **HB 1070, providing updated and expanded authority for the 'HB 1590' 1/10<sup>th</sup> of 1 cent sales tax enacted in 2020:** This bill by Rep. Cindy Ryu (D-Shoreline/32<sup>nd</sup> Dist.) is up for a Monday hearing in the House Finance Committee and is scheduled to move out of the Committee this coming Thursday. The main thrust of the bill, requested by King County, is to explicitly authorize the '1590' funds to be used for acquisition of properties to serve as permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless. Helpfully, the bill also expands the use of funding toward those experiencing homeless to include homeless individuals. The bill does not give explicit authorization to the use of the '1590' funds for rental assistance, as some had hoped it would.
- **HB 1220, supporting emergency shelters and housing through local planning and development regulations:** I've heard back a sentiment that much of this bill is worthy of support, though I've fielded some input that Secs. 3-4 are attempting to insert top-down requirements regarding local zoning decisions where short-term rentals are located. **1220** is up for a hearing on Wednesday at 10 a.m. in the House Local Government Committee.

#### **\*“Big Tent” Outdoor Recreation Coalition**

*(Budgetary, Policy Items)* WRPA supports the continued work of the “Big Tent” Outdoor Recreation Coalition, which is holding weekly policy calls during the 2021 Session. Additionally, we are part of the group that attends weekly meetings of the Outdoor Recreation Caucus (ORC). If you're a fan of attending 7 a.m. Thursday meetings, let me know and I can plug you into the ORC 😊

#### **\*Statewide Trail Plan – Multi-Modal Trails Database**

*(Capital Budget)* Our big thanks to Sen. Judy Warnick (R-Moses Lake/13<sup>th</sup> Dist.) and Rep. Sharon Shewmake (D-Bellingham/42<sup>nd</sup> Dist.), who are going to submit requests for a \$200,000 allocation in the Capital Budget towards establishing and maintaining a statewide multi-modal trails database. I want to particularly thank WRPA Legislative Chair Roxanne Miles (Pierce County), WRPA Legislative Committee Member and Past President Pete Mayer (Metro Parks Tacoma), and WRPA President Paul Simmons (Olympia) for their help on this one! We've gotten support for this initiative from Washington Bikes, Washington State Trails Association, the Washington Trails Association, the Trust for Public Land, the Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition, ForEvergreen Trails, and more!

#### Other Bills WRPA is Tracking

*(NOTE: If you have bills you think we should add, or questions on particular bills impacting local parks and recreation, e-mail me: [Doug@outcomesbylevy.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:Doug@outcomesbylevy.onmicrosoft.com))*

#### **Transportation new-revenue packages being proposed in the House and Senate – No bill numbers yet:**

Last Tuesday, we saw the Democratic Chair (*Rep. Jake Fey, D-Tacoma/27<sup>th</sup> Dist.*) and Members of the House Transportation Committee release a 16-year, \$26 billion+ transportation revenue proposal that would

represent the single largest transportation investment package in state history. Of the \$26+ billion, \$8.25 billion would be dedicated to multi-modal and carbon-reduction investments. This would include \$318 million for bicycle and pedestrian grants; \$290 million for the Safe Routes to Schools Program; \$267 million for designated bicycle/pedestrian projects; \$59 million for the Complete Streets program; and \$50 million for what is being labeled “Connecting Communities” grants. I’ve linked the “balance sheet” for the proposal below and you can see the taxing and funding sources for the proposal as well as the areas of investment. This coming week, we will see the Senate Transportation Chair (*Steve Hobbs, D-Lake Stevens/44<sup>th</sup> Dist.*) unveil an updated version of his “Forward Washington” package early this coming week – and in fact he’s scheduled a Thursday, 4 p.m. public hearing to hear stakeholder input on the package. Additionally, Sen. Rebecca Saldana (*D-Seattle/37<sup>th</sup> Dist.*) has released a 1-page list of funding and investment ideas put together by an “Evergreen” coalition of Senators – while emphasizing her objective of ultimately coalescing with Chair Hobbs on a single, agreed-to Senate Democratic plan. The “Evergreen” coalition envisions a 16-year, \$19.38 billion plan, with \$3.69 billion of that investment going toward multi-modal programs.

[House Democrats Proposed Transportation Revenue Package \(wa.gov\)](#)

- **SB 5016, all-terrain vehicles:** This bill by Sen. Judy Warnick (R-Moses Lake/13<sup>th</sup> Dist.) allows a wheeled all-terrain vehicle (WATV) to also be registered and used as a snowmobile like vehicle defined as a tracked all-terrain vehicle. **5016** had a hearing last Thursday in Senate Transportation.
- **SB 5052, creation of “health equity zones”:** The WRPA has reviewed and decided to *support* this legislation heard last Monday in the Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee. Sen. Karen Keiser (D-Des Moines/33<sup>rd</sup> Dist.) is the prime sponsor of this bill, which requires Department of Health to designate health equity zones based on health disparity data and to work with community groups to develop projects to address inequalities.
- **SB 5056, wilderness therapy programs:** Sen. Jesse Salomon (D-Shoreline/32<sup>nd</sup> Dist.) is sponsoring this legislation, which had a hearing last Monday in the Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee. Sen. Salomon’s bill requires the Department of Health to create a business license for “wilderness therapy” programs, provides parameters for what constitutes such a program, and directs a rulemaking to be completed by Dec. 31, 2022.
- **SB 5107, addressing homelessness:** This bill by Senate Housing and Local Government Ranking Member Phil Fortunato (R-31<sup>st</sup> Dist.) has not yet had a hearing. State agency and local government representatives reviewed it after seeing that it would set up a new penalty for “unauthorized camping.” The bill also requires all cities with a population of 50,000 or more to maintain at least one emergency homeless shelter.
- **SB 5110, modifying permitting telecommunications facilities:** Numerous local government speakers expressed heartburn over this bill at its hearing last Thursday, to the point where prime sponsor Doug Ericksen (R-Ferndale/42<sup>nd</sup> Dist.) wondered if he had missed the mark in the drafting of it. Along with broadening the categorical exemption for wireless facilities, it would require a city or town to act upon a complete application within 60 days rather than the current-law 120 days.
- **SB 5149/HB 1201, Funding Foundational Public Health Services:** Sen. June Robinson (D-Everett/38<sup>th</sup> Dist.) and Rep. Marcus Riccelli (D-Spokane/3<sup>rd</sup> Dist.) are the prime sponsors of this Governor-request legislation, which would impose a \$3.25/month assessment on health insurance carriers for all “covered lives.” The legislation indicates \$143 million from the assessment should be used toward foundational public health in 2024 and \$200 million in 2025. This bill will face a steep climb to achieve passage. I will be signing in *support* of **5149** when it comes up for a hearing Wednesday in the Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee.
- **SB 5159, Payments in Lieu of Property Taxes (PILT) by the Department of Fish and Wildlife:** Sen. Warnick is the sponsor of this year’s version of the PILT bill, which had a hearing last Thursday in the Senate Agriculture, Natural Resources, Water and Parks Committee and is scheduled for a vote this coming Thursday. Under the bill, the state treasurer, on behalf of WDFW, must distribute PILT to counties by April 30 of each year on game lands.
- **PSSB 5176, HB 1018 – Boating safety:** The House version of this legislation had a rocky hearing last Thursday in the House Community & Economic Development Committee. The Senate bill is due for a

hearing this coming Thursday in the Senate Agriculture, Natural Resources, Water and Parks Committee. The bills attempt to require human-powered vessel operators to obtain a boater education card (**1018**) or a certificate (**PSSB 5176**). Both bills are adamantly opposed by the paddle craft community, whose members are probably more inclined to support mandatory Personal Flotation Device (PFD) wear requirements than this type of approach. The sponsor of **1018**, Rep. John Lovick (D-Mill Creek/44<sup>th</sup> Dist.) is holding a stakeholder discussion today to see whether this legislation can be modified to be more acceptable. **5176** sponsor Kevin Van De Wege (D-Sequim/24<sup>th</sup> Dist.) would restrict the requirements in his bill to just operators who are in saltwater.

- **HB 1039, bicycle and pedestrian travel:** This bill by Rep. Bob McCaslin (R-Spokane Valley) awaits a hearing in the House Transportation Committee. The legislative intent behind **1039** is to have state agencies report on and update their educational and safety programs for bicycle and pedestrian travel so that more students can acquire safety skills.
- **HB 1057, clean air enjoyment:** Rep. Gerry Pollet (D-Seattle/46<sup>th</sup> Dist.) is the prime sponsor of this bill heard Jan. 12 in the House Environment & Energy Committee. The legislation modifies Clean Air Act definitions of “air pollutant” and adds the term “enjoyment of life and property” to allow individuals whose trip to a public park, public recreational facility, or trail to register complaints with regional clean air agencies regarding properties that emit significant odors. WRPA’s Legislative Committee reviewed this bill and decided the Association will take a neutral stand on **1057**.
- **HB 1059, fireworks prohibitions:** This legislation sponsored by Rep. Joe Fitzgibbon (D-Burien/34<sup>th</sup> Dist.) would enable ordinances enacting a ban on consumer use of fireworks to take effect immediately. This bill had a hearing last Wednesday in the House Local Government Committee and has been scheduled for a vote this coming Friday.
- **HB 1117, integrating salmon recovery into GMA comprehensive planning:** Rep. Debra Lekanoff (D-Swinomish) is the prime sponsor of this bill, which is due for a hearing this Thursday in the House Environment & Energy Committee. We reviewed this bill because it struck a statutory definition of “recreational lands” and we didn’t know why. It turns out the language strike-out was to get rid of language that had been tailored to a specific Snohomish County issue years ago and is now obsolete.
- **HB 1251, wheeled ATVs on state highways:** Rep. Ed Orcutt (R-Kalama/20<sup>th</sup> Dist.) is sponsoring this bill, which is due for a Tuesday afternoon hearing in the House Transportation Committee. **1251** expands the locations where a person may potentially operate a wheeled all-terrain vehicle on state highways to unincorporated areas with a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less. It also makes the operation of a wheeled all-terrain vehicle on unincorporated stretches of state highways contingent upon the passage of an ordinance approving their operation by the legislative authority of the county in which the state highway segment is located.
- **HB 1322, off-road vehicle enforcement:** Rep. Sharon Wylie (D-Vancouver/49<sup>th</sup> Dist.), a vice-chair of the House Transportation Committee, is prime-sponsoring this legislation. It is designed to close an exemption loophole provided to off-road vehicles owned by residents of Oregon.
- **HB 1330, electric bicycles/sales tax:** Rep. Sharon Shewmake (D-Bellingham/42<sup>nd</sup> Dist.), is the prime sponsor of this bill, which awaits a hearing in the House Finance Committee. **1330** would provide a sales tax exemption on the purchase of new electric bikes and up to \$200 in related cycling equipment.