RECREATION AND CONSERVATION PLAN
APPENDIX 4

65-04-2 TRAIL GOALS AND POLICIES

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

TRAIL GOALS AND POLICIES

Adopted December 2, 2004

The following goals and policies provide guidance for trail planners and managers in the development and use of State Parks' trails.

Section I Non-Motorized Trail Goals and Policies……...2
Section II Water Trail Goals and Policies……..6
Section III Winter Non-Motorized Trail Goals and Policies……10
Section IV Winter Motorized Trail Goals and Policies……14

Section I

NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL GOALS AND POLICIES

The following goals and policies provide guidance for trail planners and managers in the development and use of State Parks non-motorized trails:

DEFINITIONS: For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Bicycle – any wheeled, operator-propelled equipment that transports the operator on land but not including wheelchairs or other devices utilized by persons with disabilities.
Dog-powered sports – any trail use wherein a person or device is drawn by or propelled by a dog or dogs.
Equestrian – a person using pack or saddle stock (horses, mules, llamas, goats, etc.) on trails.
Non-motorized trail – any pathway used for muscle-powered recreational activities.
Pedestrian – any person who uses a trail on foot or in a manual or electric wheelchair (or similar mobility assistive device).

Goal 1: *Provide a diverse and superb system of non-motorized trail opportunities in State Parks to include pedestrian, bicycle, equestrian and dog-powered sports and experiences and facilities for all persons, including those with disabilities.*

POLICIES:

A. The Trails Mission - Providing trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians, dog-powered sports and persons with disabilities is part of the mission of Washington State Parks. Trails must be appropriately designed, constructed and maintained to effectively accommodate any or all of these non-motorized trail users. Trails must be appropriately designed, constructed and maintained to currently accepted standards to effectively accommodate the designated use(s) and protect the resource.

B. Variety of Opportunities - Within the statewide system of trails managed by State Parks, a variety of trail experiences will be furnished. These range from highly developed, intensively managed trails to low-intensity primitive trails; from shared use trails capable of safely accommodating equestrian, bicycle, dog and foot use simultaneously to trails suitable for a single use only; from highly challenging trails desired by the most proficient users to trails that are highly accessible for users of diverse skill levels and physical abilities.

C. Prioritization of Uses

1. In general, State Parks trails are designed and managed for pedestrian uses.
2. Shared use should occur wherever the resource base is adequate to give a desired recreational experience, and where resource impacts and visitor safety can be managed within acceptable levels. Evaluation of such appropriateness will be based on criteria established by the Director or designee.
3. Rail-Trails will be designed as shared use facilities (utilizing parallel paths of hardened and soft surface where practical), unless specific conditions make such designation infeasible.
4. In larger parks, quality trail opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, dog-powered sports enthusiasts and equestrians may be provided where suitable.
5. Shared use trails are encouraged in Resource Recreation classified areas in large parks where they can meet all approved evaluation criteria.
6. Trail use allocations may be made on the basis of location, time or both. Trail use allocation will be made in a manner that is efficient and effective to manage at the park level and is clear and simple to follow by trail users.

D. Minimize User Conflicts and Safety Hazards

1. Trail use etiquette will be standardized within the State Parks system.
2. Trail access points should be properly signed to indicate allowed and prohibited uses, to prevent conflicts due to unauthorized use.
3. Efforts will be made to regularly educate park users and staff in areas of conflict resolution, safety issues and appropriate use of shared use facilities.

Goal 2: Construct and Maintain Quality Trails

POLICIES:

A. Standards to Reflect Use - Trails and related facilities are to be constructed and maintained to standards reflecting anticipated use, desired experience and natural resource protection. Trail information may be posted, where appropriate, along the trail using accepted standards.

B. Stakeholder involvement – State Parks will solicit stakeholder involvement early in the process of planning for any project or facility.

C. Shared Use Standards - If trails are shared, standards for the use with the most restrictive suitability requirements will be used.

D. Standards to Remain Flexible - Trail standards represent requirements for typical sections of typical trails.

Goal 3: Enhance Trail Partnerships

POLICIES:

A. Trail Linkages - State Parks shall work cooperatively with local, regional, state, tribal and federal jurisdictions, trail users, public and private organizations, and adjacent property owners in the development of regional recreation trails that are partially within state park areas or that provide connections to state park areas. The agency will support use of state park areas for such trails when those trails are designed and managed to allow access for State Parks visitors, are consistent with existing and planned uses within the park, adequately protect park resources, and do not significantly impair park security, manageability or visitor safety.

B. Linear Parks (principally Rail-Trails) - State Parks shall take an active approach to coordination with local governments in the acquisition, planning, design, development and management of linear parks. Partnerships with local governments in trail development, maintenance and law enforcement (where permitted) are encouraged where such efforts benefit park users, park resources, local government, and State Parks.

C. Volunteerism - State Parks will actively encourage volunteer efforts in the design, placement, construction and maintenance of trails, on-going efforts for trail use etiquette education, and other items to improve the system of State Parks' trails.

D. Partnerships with Private Land Owners - State Parks may explore the potential to manage private lands for trail use, including recreational leases on large tract forestlands and other partnership opportunities.

E. New State Park lands – When new lands are acquired by the State Parks, continuation of historical use of existing trails shall be studied and considered when continued use would meet existing trail policies.

Goal 4: Establish Consistent Standards for Equestrian, Dog-powered and Bicycle Use

POLICIES:

A. Procedures - Guidelines for opening or closing trails for equestrian, dog-powered and bicycle use will be consistent.

B. Presumptive Status - Equestrian, dog-powered and bicycle use will be prohibited unless specifically authorized.

Goal 5: Expand and Enhance Trail Opportunities for Equestrians, Dog-Powered Sports and Bicyclists.

POLICIES:

A. Linear Parks - Linear parks will be designed for equestrian, dog-powered and bicycle use where feasible. State Parks will continue to pursue completion of the cross-state trail system and be a strong advocate for a comprehensive program of interconnected trails of local, regional, state-wide, national and international significance.

B. Non-Linear Parks - New trail opportunities will be identified and developed in state parks where equestrian, dog-powered and/or bicycle use is determined to be appropriate. As trail plans are prepared for individual parks, locations will be identified for new and expanded equestrian, dog-powered sports and/or bicycling trails, where appropriate. Proposals for new and enhanced trails will be regularly included in the agency's biennial capital budget requests.

C. Destination Parks - Identify suitable parks as destination or preferred use sites for specific varieties of trail users. This may include consideration of capital budget requests and promotion of special events to provide unique opportunities for different users.

Section II

NON-MOTORIZED WATER TRAIL GOALS AND POLICIES

The following goals and policies provide guidance for trail planners and managers in the development and use of State Parks non-motorized water trails and their associated facilities:

DEFINITIONS:

A. Water Trail – A route along a river or across other bodies of water such as lakes or salt water for people using small, beachable boats like kayaks, canoes, day sailers or rowboats.

B. Water Trail Facilities – Facilities used by non-motorized boaters. These include launch and landing sites (sometimes referred to as trailheads), campsites, rest areas, and other points of interest.

C. Water Trail Recreation Program – Program established to develop water trails, sites and supporting facilities (see RCW 79A.05.380).

Goal 1:

Provide a diverse and superb system of non-motorized water trail recreational opportunities in a State Park trail system including experiences and facilities for all persons, including those with disabilities.

POLICIES:

A. The Trails Mission - Providing water trails for a wide range of non-motorized boating users is part of the mission of Washington State Parks. Water trail facilities must be appropriately designed, constructed and maintained to effectively accommodate any or all of these non-motorized trail users and to protect the resource.

B. Variety of Opportunities - Within the statewide system of trails managed by State Parks, a variety of water trail facilities shall be furnished. Top priority is to provide sites, within a day's travel of each other, that offer a safe harbor for water trail users.

C. Minimize User Conflicts and Safety Hazards.

1. Water trail facility use will be standardized within the State Parks system.
2. All trail access points will be properly signed to indicate allowed and prohibited uses, to minimize to user conflicts and/or resource damage due to unauthorized use.
3. Where appropriate, efforts will be made to educate park users and staff in areas of conflict resolution, safety issues and appropriate use of shared use facilities. Adherence to applicable low impact trail use guidelines such as "Leave No Trace©" should be displayed and encouraged.
4. Water trail facility restrictions such as group size etc. are reasonable management tools. Such restrictions shall be posted and enforced at all shoreline access points and boat launch areas and at intervals on the water trail where deemed appropriate.

Goal 2: Construct and Maintain Quality Water Trail Facilities

POLICIES:

A. Standards to Reflect Use – Water trail facilities are to be constructed and maintained to standards reflecting anticipated use and desired experience. Water trail information may be posted, where appropriate, along the trail using accepted standards.

B. Standards to Remain Flexible – Water trail facility standards represent requirements for typical sections of typical water trails. It should be expected that some water trail facilities may not meet all standards due to specific site constraints.

C. Stakeholder involvement – State Parks will solicit stakeholder involvement early in the process of planning for any project or facility.

Goal 3: Enhance Trail Partnerships

POLICIES:

A. Trail Linkages - State Parks shall work cooperatively with local, regional, state, tribal and federal jurisdictions, water trail users, public and private organizations, and adjacent property owners in the development of regional recreational water trails that are partially within state park areas or that provide connections to state park areas. The agency will support use of state park areas for such water trail facilities when those water trails are designed and managed to allow access for State Parks visitors, are

consistent with existing and planned uses within the park, adequately protect park resources, and do not significantly impair park security, manageability or visitor safety.

B. Volunteerism - State Parks shall actively encourage volunteer efforts in the design, placement, construction and maintenance of water trails facilities, on-going efforts for trail use etiquette education, and other items to improve the system of State Parks' water trails.

C. Partnerships with Private Land Owners - State Parks may explore the potential to plan, construct and maintain suitable facilities for water trail activities on lands administered or acquired by the Commission, including recreational leases on large tract forestlands and other partnership opportunities, as defined in RCW 79A.05.385 and 79A.05.390.

D. New State Park lands – When new lands are acquired by the State Parks, continuation of historical use of waterways by non-motorized boats should be considered whenever possible.

E. In parks which border other public lands which offer water trail recreation opportunities, State Parks should evaluate and facilitate (when deemed appropriate) establishment of water trail sites linking to adjacent water trail sites or areas with the adjacent land manager. State Parks shall only add facilities that might increase use on another landowners' trail system when the partnering agencies have completed any necessary environmental and management reviews and can demonstrate that the trails in that system have been constructed to standard, have adequate enforcement and funding for ongoing maintenance and management.

Goal 4: Establish Consistent Standards for Use

POLICIES:

A. Procedures - Guidelines for opening or closing water trail facilities will be consistent throughout the agency.

Goal 5: Expand and Enhance Trail Opportunities for Non-Motorized Boating

POLICIES:

A. State Parks shall pursue and encourage implementation of water trails where feasible and appropriate.

B. New trail opportunities may be identified and developed in state parks where non-motorized boat use is determined to be appropriate. As water trail plans are prepared, locations may be identified for potential new and expanded facilities. Proposals for new and enhanced water trail facilities may be included in the agency's biennial capital budget requests.

C. Destination Sites - Identify suitable destination or preferred use sites for specific varieties of water trail users. This may include consideration of capital budget requests and promotion of special events to provide unique opportunities for different users.

Section III

WINTER NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL GOALS AND POLICIES

The following goals and policies provide guidance for trail planners and managers in the development and use of State Parks trails during the winter season:

Definitions: For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

DEFINITIONS:

A. Groomed Cross Country Ski Trail – A winter trail that is designed, marked and groomed for travel by a person or persons using cross-country ski equipment only.

B. Groomed Dog Sled Trail – A winter trail that is designed, marked and groomed for a person or persons using dog sled teams.

C. Dog Sled Team – A group of dogs, in harness, that work together to pull a dog sled or cross country skier (skijoring). The dogs are paired along a line with from one to 16 dogs.

D. Sno-Parks provide cleared parking areas for winter recreationists in close proximity to groomed and/or backcountry trails.

E. Non-Groomed Trail – A winter trail that is designed and marked for either cross country skiing, snowshoeing or dog sled teams and is not groomed.

Goal 1: *Provide a diverse and superb system of non-motorized winter recreation trail opportunities in State Parks to include cross country skiers, dog sled teams and snowshoers as well as experiences and facilities for persons with disabilities.*

POLICIES:

A. The Trails Mission - Providing winter recreation trails and Sno-Parks for cross country skiers, dog sled teams and snowshoers including experiences and facilities for persons with disabilities is part of the mission of Washington State Parks. Trails and Sno-Parks must be appropriately designed, constructed and maintained to effectively accommodate any or all of these non-motorized trail users and protect the resource.

B. Variety of Opportunities - Within the statewide system of trails managed by State Parks, a variety of trail experiences and Sno-Parks will be furnished. These range from highly developed, intensively managed trails to low-intensity primitive trails; from shared use trails capable of safely accommodating cross country skiers, dog sled teams and snowshoers use simultaneously to trails suitable for a single use only; from highly challenging trails desired by the most proficient users to trails that are highly accessible for users of diverse skill levels.

C. Prioritization of Uses

1. In general, State Parks non-motorized winter recreation trails and Sno-Parks are designed and managed for cross-country ski use.
2. Rail – Trails will be designed as shared use facilities, unless specific conditions make such designation infeasible (utilizing parallel groomed trails of flat grooming and grooming with ski tracks where practical).
3. In larger park trail systems, multiple use trails will be provided where suitable.
4. Sno-Parks servicing dog sled trails should be designed with safe access. Dog sled teams should be provided designated and marked parking in a good location to safely access multi-use trails.
5. Trail use allocations may be made on the basis of location, time or both. Trail use allocation will be made in a manner that is efficient and effective to manage at the park level and is clear and simple to follow by trail users.

D. Minimize User Conflicts and Safety Hazards

1. Trail use etiquette will be standardized within the State Parks system. All trail users are obligated to use good judgment to prevent accidents and injuries when they encounter or overtake other trail users. When passing another trail user, each person should communicate his or her intentions to the other for passing safely.
2. Shared use may occur wherever the resource base is adequate to give a desired recreational experience, and where resource impacts and visitor safety can be managed within acceptable levels. Evaluation of such appropriateness will be based on criteria established by the Director or designee.
3. All trail access points will be properly signed to indicate allowed and prohibited uses, to prevent conflicts due to unauthorized use.
4. Efforts will be made to regularly educate park users and staff in areas of conflict resolution, safety issues and appropriate use of shared use facilities.

Goal 2: Construct and Maintain Quality Non-Motorized Winter Trails and Sno-Parks

POLICIES:

A. Standards to Reflect Use – Non-motorized winter trails and Sno-Parks are to be designed, located, constructed, signed and maintained to standards reflecting anticipated use, desired experience, and natural resource protection.

B. Shared Use Standards - If non-motorized winter trails and Sno-Parks are shared, standards for the use with the most restrictive suitability requirements will be used.

C. Standards to Remain Flexible – Non-motorized winter trail and Sno-Park standards represent requirements for typical sections of typical trails.

D. Stakeholder involvement – State Parks will solicit stakeholder involvement early in the process of planning for any project or facility.

Goal 3: Enhance Trail Partnerships

POLICIES:

A. Trail Linkages - State Parks shall work cooperatively with local, regional, state, tribal and federal jurisdictions, trail users, public and private organizations, and adjacent property owners in the development of regional recreation trails that are partially within state park areas or that provide connections to state park areas. The agency will support use of state park areas for such trails when those trails are designed and managed to allow access for State Parks visitors, are consistent with existing and planned uses within the park, adequately protect park resources, and do not significantly impair park security, manageability or visitor safety.

B. Volunteerism - State Parks will actively encourage volunteer efforts in the design, placement, construction and maintenance of trails, on-going efforts for trail use etiquette education, and other items to improve the system of State Parks trails.

C. Partnerships with Private Land Owners - State Parks may explore the potential to manage private lands for trail use, including recreational leases on large tract forestlands and other partnership opportunities.

D. New State Park lands – When new lands are acquired by State Parks, continuation of historical use of existing trails shall be studied and considered when continued use would meet existing trail policies.

Goal 4: Establish Consistent Standards for Non-Motorized Winter Use

POLICIES:

A. Procedures - Guidelines for opening or closing trails for winter recreation use will be consistent throughout the agency, with site-specific considerations, and designed to protect the underlying tread and terrain.

B. Presumptive Status – Dog sled teams, snowshoers and people walking on snow will be prohibited on groomed cross-country ski trails unless specifically authorized.

Goal 5: Expand and Enhance Trail Opportunities for Non-Motorized Winter Use

POLICIES:

A. Linear Parks – Should be designed to include dog sled teams and snowshoers where feasible.

B. Non-Linear Parks – New trail opportunities may be identified and developed in state parks where dog sled teams and snowshoers use is determined to be appropriate. As trail plans are prepared for individual parks, locations may be identified for new and expanded dog sled teams and snowshoers. Proposals for new and enhanced trails may be regularly included in the agency's biennial capital budget requests.

C. Sno-Parks – Design and develop Sno-Parks that are safe and well organized in order to maximize the space available. Locate and mark dog sled parking nearest to and in line of dog sled trails, where applicable. Provide information on trail uses, conditions, grooming schedules, parking procedures, trail etiquette and any other information that will minimize user conflicts and reduce safety hazards.

Section IV

WINTER MOTORIZED TRAIL GOALS AND POLICIES

The following goals and policies provide guidance for trail planners and managers in the development and use of State Parks trails during the winter season:

Definitions: For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

DEFINITIONS:

A. “Winter trail use” refers to use of trails that are covered with snow or to use of trails during the season when they might reasonably be expected to be covered with snow.

B. "Snowmobile" as defined in RCW 46.10.10.

C. An ORV is defined for purposes of this document as any off-road use vehicle, either stock, modified stock or custom built. Vehicles shall include motorcycles, quads, 4 wheel drive off-road vehicles such as Jeeps and trucks that comply with all current federal and state regulations such as noise emission. (Reference RCW 46.09).

D. "All terrain vehicle" shall mean any self-propelled vehicle other than a snowmobile, per RCW 46.10.10.

E. Sno-Parks provide cleared parking areas for winter recreationists in close proximity to groomed and/or backcountry trails.

F. "ORV trail" means a multiple-use corridor designated and maintained for recreational travel by off-road vehicles that is not normally suitable for travel by conventional two-wheel drive vehicles and is posted or designated by State Parks as permitting ORV travel.

Goal 1:

Provide opportunities for motorized winter experiences in the State Park trails system, where appropriate.

POLICIES:

A. Mission – Provide, where appropriate, motorized winter recreation trails and Sno-Parks for snowmobilers, persons with disabilities, and other patrons to use and enjoy State Parks lands and/or use State Parks lands to connect to lands of other jurisdictions during the winter season. Trails for motorized winter use must be appropriately designed, constructed and maintained to currently accepted standards to effectively accommodate the designated use(s) and protect the resource.

B. Variety of Opportunities - Within the statewide system of snow-covered trails and Sno-Parks managed by State Parks, a variety of trail experiences may be furnished. These range from highly developed, intensively used trails to low-intensity primitive trails; from shared use trails capable of safely accommodating multiple modes of use simultaneously to trails suitable for a single use only; from highly challenging trails desired by the most proficient users to trails that are suitable for users of all skill levels.

C. Prioritization of Uses

1. Shared trail use should only occur (1) where the resource base is adequate to give a desired recreational experience, and where resource impacts and visitor safety can be managed within acceptable levels or (2) to provide access to trails with more restrictive uses. Motorized use must be consistent with the Recreation Area classification and should not infringe upon the experiences of other trail users. Evaluation of such appropriateness will be based on (1) criteria established by the Director or designee and/or (2) feedback from the users.
2. Future rail corridors may be considered for designation as motorized facilities, under limited conditions.
3. In larger parks, quality trail opportunities for snowmobile activities, which cover extended distances, may be provided where suitable.
4. Trail use allocations may be made on the basis of location, time or both. Trail use allocation will be made in a manner that is efficient and effective to manage at the park level and is clear and simple to follow by trail user.

D. Minimize User Conflicts and Safety Hazards

1. Trail use etiquette will be standardized within the State Parks system. All trail users are obligated to use good judgment to prevent accidents and injuries when they encounter or overtake other trail users. When passing another trail user, each person should communicate his or her intentions to the other for passing safely.

2. All trail access points will be properly signed to indicate allowed and prohibited uses, to minimize user conflicts and/or resource damage due to unauthorized use.
3. Where appropriate, efforts will be made to educate park users and staff in areas of conflict resolution, safety issues and appropriate use of shared use facilities. Adherence to applicable low impact trail use guidelines such as “Leave No Trace®” and “Tread Lightly®” shall be displayed and encouraged.
4. Trail restrictions such as speed, noise, travel direction, group size, etc. are reasonable management tools. Such restrictions shall be posted and enforced at all trailheads and at intervals on the trail where deemed appropriate.

Goal 2: Construct and Maintain Quality Motorized Winter Trails and Sno-Parks

POLICIES:

A. Standards to Reflect Use – Motorized winter trails and Sno-Parks are to be designed, located, constructed, signed and maintained to standards reflecting anticipated use, desired experience, and natural resource protection.

B. Shared Use Standards - If motorized winter trails and Sno-Parks are shared, standards for the use with the most restrictive suitability requirements will be used.

C. Standards to Remain Flexible – Motorized winter trail and Sno-Park standards represent requirements for typical sections of typical trails.

D. Stakeholder involvement – State Parks will solicit stakeholder involvement early in the process of planning for any project or facility.

Goal 3: Enhance Trail Partnerships

POLICIES:

A. Trail Linkages - State Parks shall work cooperatively with local, regional, state, tribal and federal jurisdictions, trail users, public and private organizations, and adjacent property owners in the development of regional recreation trails that are partially within state park areas or that provide connections to state park areas. The agency may support use of state park areas for such trails when those trails are designed and managed to allow access for State Parks visitors, are consistent with

existing and planned uses within the park, adequately protect park resources, and do not significantly impair park security, manageability or visitor safety.

B. Volunteerism - State Parks will actively encourage volunteer efforts in the design, placement, construction and maintenance of trails, on-going efforts for trail use etiquette education, and other items to improve the system of State Parks trails.

C. Partnerships with Private Land Owners - State Parks may explore the potential to manage private lands for trail use, including recreational leases on large tract forestlands and other partnership opportunities.

D. New State Park lands – When new lands are acquired by State Parks, continuation of historical use of existing trails shall be studied and considered when continued use would meet existing trail policies.

E. In parks that border other public lands, which offer winter trail recreation opportunities, State Parks shall evaluate and facilitate (when deemed appropriate) implementation of trailhead facilities linking to adjacent motorized trails or areas with the adjacent land manager. State Parks shall only add facilities that might increase use on another landowners' trail system when the partnering agencies have completed any necessary environmental and management reviews, and can demonstrate that the trails in that system have been constructed to standard, have adequate enforcement and funding for ongoing maintenance and management.

Goal 4: Establish Consistent Standards for Motorized Winter Use

POLICIES:

A. Procedures - Guidelines for opening or closing trails for winter recreation use will be consistent throughout the agency, and designed to protect the underlying tread and terrain. [add this phrase to all policies]

B. Presumptive Status – Motorized winter trail use will be prohibited unless specifically authorized. Wheeled vehicles will not use trails groomed for snowmobile use.

Goal 5: Expand and Enhance Trail Opportunities for Motorized Winter Use

POLICIES:

A. State Parks should pursue and encourage implementation of motorized winter recreation trails and Sno-Parks where feasible and appropriate.

B. New trail opportunities may be identified and developed in state parks where motorized winter recreation use is determined to be appropriate. As trail and Sno-Park plans are prepared for individual parks, locations may be identified for potential new and expanded motorized winter recreation trails. Proposals for new and enhanced trails and Sno-Parks may be included in the agency's biennial capital budget requests.

C. Sno-Parks – Design and develop Sno-Parks that are safe and well organized in order to maximize the space available. Provide information on trail uses, conditions, grooming schedules, parking procedures, trail etiquette and any other information that will minimize user conflicts and reduce safety hazards.

(CM December 2004)