Westport Light State Park Public Comments

April – May 2025

Support the golf course proposal...build it and i will support it by dropping time and money to visit and play the course! These towns are drying up and with time things change! So too must our thinking...we can be environmentally conscious and still create public access! ¹

Dear Westport City Administrator and WA State Parks and Recreation Commission Planning and Real Estate Program,

I am writing to **oppose** the development of the Scottish Links-style golf course within the existing boundaries of Westport Light State Park based on the fact that it's a poor investment idea with public funds and lands that does not resolve the issue of the the livelihood of the City being very tourism-reliant and having significantly less tourism outside of the Summer months driven largely by the weather.

Rainfall Comparison to Bandon, OR, Brewster, WA & Saint Andrews, Scotland The Westport Golf Links proposal cites the similar style golf course in Bandon, OR designed by the same team (designer is based in Oregon). In 2024, Bandon, OR received 18.74 inches of rainfall, (below the yearly average of 30.64 inches) while Westport, WA received an average of 76 inches. Further, the design team created similar golf courses in Brewster, WA where the average rainfall is noted as 13 inches and Saint Andrews, Scotland where the annual rainfall is approximately 32 inches. This is nowhere near 76 inches.

Combine this extraordinary amount of rainfall with high winds upwards of 20 mph commonly found throughout the Winter and early Spring months in Westport, and who is going to tee up and pay for these activities outside the already established high tourism season in Westport?

There is already a golf course in nearby Ocean Shores

Its financial impact on the city is available via Ocean Shores' very transparent financial reporting: here. In 2024, the budgeted revenue was \$216k. The actual revenue was \$3500. Ocean Shores is 45 miles north of Westport Light State Park.

Washington's Golf Market is Reducing not Growing

Per Westport Golf Links own Economic Impact Report, Washington's Golf Market is contracting, not growing. The January 2017 study commissioned by the Golf Alliance of Washington found that (when adjusted for inflation) the golf economy declined from \$1.19 billion in economic activity in 2007 to \$1.16 billion in 2015. "However, it is expected that some of this contraction was related to the specific economic conditions between 2007 and 2015, particularly the "Great Recession" which reduced consumer spending and discretionary spending and, as such, tourism and recreation spending,

including on golf". Please take a look at American financial markets and forecasts as of April 2025.²

Why public state park land?

In its current state, the state park is currently rated 4.7 on Google (1.5k reviews), TripAdvisor (19 reviews), and AllTrails (450 reviews). This state park is a wonderful public offering for its visitors and home to an abundant and diverse ecosystem of flora, fauna, and unique wetlands³ that were never intended for golf. Please see cities' annual rainfall within the Olympic Rain Shadow⁴ and re-consider your ideal location.

Some alternative revenue-generating ideas

Alternative revenue-generating ideas that take into context the local ebbs and flows of nature which heavily impact the beloved small coastal town of Westport, WA and respect and protect its current residents:

- Tourism tax for hotels, recreation (the city of Bandon's Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) is 9.5% and was approved by local residents by special election in 2022 (previously 6%). At the time of the vote, the City estimated the higher rate could bring in an additional \$500,000 per year. ⁵ Please review Ocean Shores golf course numbers above.
- Recreation Center development with multiple revenue streams available
- Summer music festival or concert series
- Create "off-season" festivals: "Rainy Day/Weekend, Storm Watching Festivals", Birding, Whale watching, Mushrooms, and promote local specialties: Chinook Festival
- Indoor Sports and Recreation (yay for the bowling alley on its way)
- Outdoor Movie Nights in summer
- More surf competitions and events
- Develop biking trails and/or track + host competitions (looks like there is land available south of Cohasset Beach?)
- Remote Work Hub: Market Westport as a destination for remote workers, offering affordable accommodation, co-working spaces, and amenities that cater to their needs bringing visitors year-round.

This is just a basic draft of ideas. More research is needed. Sincerely ²

¹https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ffe4d1e3f3741656f959a83/t/6759c1846d97a0 1bed71dfe2/173393

5494702/Westport+Golf+Links+Economic+Impact+Study_Full+Report+Updated+Oct+2 022.pdf

⁵https://www.klcc.org/politics-government/2022-08-24/bandon-voters-approve-big-increase-to-citys-lodging -tax 4

4https://www.olympicrainshadow.com/olympicrainshadowmap.html 3

3https://parks.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-10/Habitat%20Report_9-22-21.pdf 2

²https://www.anderson.ucla.edu/about/centers/ucla-anderson-forecast/recession-watch-2025

Why wasn't this complaint mentioned in the DEIS? Have the issues been resolved? 3

As a native Washingtonian I was thrilled to hear about the new golf course being built in Westport. The group managing this project are some of the best in the world and you couldn't ask for a better steward for the environment than David Mcklay Kidd. He is an expert at maintaining the natural environment and bringing unusable areas to life through his love of history and golf. My wife grew up in grays harbor and her family and the broader community have seen the devastation that can occur when environmentalists get their way. I sincerely hope the community will support this and embrace the opportunity in front of them. This golf course will be world class and will reinvigorated the local economy and give other people around the world an opportunity to experience one of the most beautiful places on the planet.

I recently walked along the park to check out the site and the land in its current state has not been well maintained. I believe the project and investments proposed will only help local wild life thrive as well as protect the land long term. Please don't let this beautiful area continue to deteriorate and give DMK the opportunity to turn this beautiful canvas into a work of art! ⁴

- *I'm concerned people walking on trails could be struck by golf balls. Golf balls can cause serious injury.
- *My leashed dog is frequently attacked here in Westport by unleashed dogs, will those unleashed dogs be making messes that golfers will be stepping in?
- *Traffic is already very bad at times here in Westport, can Westport handle additional traffic? will there be increased accidents? I've witnessed a deer hit and killed on Ocean Ave. by one of the many speeding motorists that drive that road.
- *As far as I know the Ocean Shores golf course hasn't generated enough money to pay for itself and because of that, all property owners are forced to pay an annual fee. Could that happen here in Westport?
- *Are there enough wind and rain free days in Westport to be practical for a golf course? It seems like we should be looking for ways to encourage people to come here to Westport in the winter when businesses are struggling. ⁵

Please add my name to those who support the Westport Light Project. The proposed Scottish links-style golf course would add immense value to our area while being ever mindful of its environmental challenges. ⁶

westport light state park. Who benefits? Who pays property taxes? . What exactly does underutilized recreational Designated essential tidal wetland mean? How would even minimal disruption of pristine tideland add or enhance the natural beauty or hydrological functional importance of these 600 + acres. Once altered it will no longer be unmolested coastal tideland. One of precious few remaining in the Pacific northwest. To date the principals of this project have only money to offer as rational in destroying the fabric of westport WA. Very nearly every property put up for sale includes its value based on the proposed Golf project. The local full time residents witnessed this same Circus event with these same developers .property values went up promises were made everyone was going to get rich oh and the parkland would be made better this time everything promises to be even more better. Housing taxes infrastructure water sewer the list goes

on how can the stewards of public lands dare put it into the hands of agenda oriented real estate sales people/ developers those responsible should be made to answer. ⁷

The park, as I experience it today, is increasingly covered by invasive scotch broom. I haven't seen very many people using the wooded paths that have many large puddles most of the year. My understanding is the asphalt path will be persevered for public use. I'm for the new development and the influx of tourist activity to Westport. 8

Hello-

As someone who cherishes the Washington coast and visits Westport at least ten times a year as an avid surfer, I am enthusiastic about the proposed Westport Golf Links project. Economically, this development promises a vital injection of tourism revenue, the creation of local jobs in various sectors, and increased spending at local businesses – benefits that will strengthen the entire Westport community.

Beyond the economic advantages, this project offers significant land use benefits, particularly in its commitment to environmental stewardship. The inclusion of dedicated funding to actively combat fire danger through proactive vegetation management and the establishment of natural firebreaks is a crucial step in protecting this valuable natural area. Furthermore, the allocation of resources to shore up beach erosion is especially important to me as someone who directly enjoys and relies on the health of this coastline. Preserving the integrity of the shoreline not only safeguards the park's natural beauty but also ensures the long-term viability of the surf breaks I and many others frequent.

The Westport Golf Links project presents a unique opportunity to harmonize thoughtful recreational development with responsible environmental management. It demonstrates a commitment to the long-term well-being of Westport, offering both economic growth and crucial environmental protections that will benefit both the local community and those of us who come to appreciate its natural wonders year after year. ⁹

City of Westport

Attn: Tom Cappa, City Administrator

PO Box 505

Westport, WA 98595

Re: Project file 25-COW-EIS-01, public comment

As former long-time Washington State Parks and Recreation Director and Commissioners we are writing to register our support for the DEIS and to urge all local, state and federal permitting and regulatory agencies to take appropriate steps to allow the Westport Golf Links project to move forward.

As former State Parks Commissions we believe this project is consistent with the Mission and Values of Washington State Parks which are:

Mission:

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission cares for Washington's most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.

Vision:

Washington's state parks will be cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support.

As former Commissioners we believe that the Westport Golf Links project presents a unique opportunity to leverage private funding to enhance access and use of Westport Lighthouse State Park including tripling of public trails and allowing active recreational use on many acres that are now overgrown with shore pine and scotch broom.

We'd also like to make note of the fact that about ten years ago the Washington State Legislature mandated that State Parks undertake an effort to create new partnerships with private and non-profit organizations to increase public use and access to underutilized state park properties and such an effort was undertaken (Recreation Concession Area or RCA). The proposed Westport Golf Links proposal is completely in keeping with legislative intent and the RCA initiative launched by Washington State Parks nearly a decade ago.

Much has already been said about the positive economic impact that the Westport Golf Links project will have on the economy in the Westport region. The importance of this can't be understated. But is also important to know that at a time when general tax support for State Parks is being reduced the financial benefit this project holds for Washington State Parks is significant. More people will visit Westport Lighthouse State Parks and nearby state parks. More Discover Passes will be sold. And more day use passes will be sold. State Parks will benefit financially at a time when their finances are greatly challenged.

Finally we are very excited about all the environment and economic benefits that will result when this project goes forward. Bringing a World-class recreational amenity to Westport that restores the natural features of the property, and repairs damage from earlier development while preserving its vital role by absorbing storm surge presents a truly transformational and responsible opportunity. The DEIS has provided a pathway to allow this project to proceed, a move which we strongly support.

Mark O. Brown

Signed by Mark O. Brown on behalf of self and:

Former State Parks Director (2010-2021/acting 2021-2022)

Don Hoch (2011 – 2021)

Former State Park Commissioners:

Mark O. Brown (2011-2023)

Cindy Whaley (2009-22)

Rodger Schmitt (2010-17)

Steve Milner (2011-2022)

Pat Lantz (2010-2020)

Cc: WSPRC members, WSPRC Director Diana Dupuis 10

I am writing this letter to provide my personal commentary on the Westport Golf Links DEIS as a part of the 45 day commentary period. For reasons I will outline below, I am strongly advocating for Alternative 3: No action. I believe that this project as outlined in Alternatives 1 and 2 are not in keeping with the character of Westport as I see it or the mission of Washington State Parks.

I have been a full-time resident of Westport for over 10 years. My family has also owned property in the area through my entire life. Westport has always been a special place to us and has a character that is unique among beach towns in the area. While I do support further development and opportunities within the community, I strongly believe that a slower and more calculated approach would be better.

Westport is fortunate to have a beautiful natural character. We have great open spaces and many opportunities to interact with the natural environment. In recent years, we have experienced significant development in our coastal dune areas. Not very long ago, you could stand on the beach and be surrounded by open dunes and pine forests on one side with the Pacific Ocean on the other. The once longer access points kept vast swaths of the beach uncrowded. Development has increased in rate recently and significantly altered the overall landscape and area around coastal Westport. The large, high-value homes are largely owned by out of the area owners and many are run as vacation rentals. They do not match the character of the rest of the Westport area. There is no way to restore the previous natural beauty to these areas. From the beach, you now see nothing but homes when looking shoreward.

Westport Light State Park stands out in its current form due to the large natural area along the coastline. This is the last remaining spot on the South Beach that you can look

shoreward without seeing development. Walking on the dune trail or beach provides the rare experience of getting away from crowds and developments and experiencing the natural beauty. This large piece of open land offers trails, animal habitat, and wonderful scenery. This is truly a place that, once altered, we will never be able to get back on the South Beach. This area provides opportunities for surfing, beachcombing, fishing, and long walks. I feel that very few current users of the park come here and feel that this place needs a golf course.

I have closely reviewed each alternative for the Westport Golf Links. I can see that the course itself is designed to blend into the natural area. I'm sure it will still greatly disturb the views from the beach as well as the character of the dune trail area. I think a bigger impact to the Westport area will be the infrastructure required to make the course successful. A major part of the beauty of this park is the Jetty Haul Road area. Adding parking and infrastructure on the south side of the road will fully ruin that beautiful drive. I can't imagine seeing that area decimated with a driving range, clubhouse, and parking lot. I believe there are so many uses for that area that would better blend into the natural environment as well as provide access and enjoyment for many.

Golf, while popular, is a niche sport. More courses are closing than opening in recent years. It is a high-cost hobby that is not accessible for many Washington residents. I'm told that people will travel from "across the United States and even internationally" to play this course. That seems to conflict with the Mission, Vision, and Values of Washington State parks which specify throughout that they are for the benefit of Washingtonians. While other State Parks have golf facilities, they are not positioned in areas that so greatly alter the character of the surrounding community. The Westport Golf Links project is entirely within the small city of Westport. I believe this is a poor use for any State Parks land, particularly in the area proposed. If WGL wants to build a golf course, they should acquire private lands for their project. While not every park-goer at Westport Light State Park surfs or fishes, participating in those activities does not ruin the experience for those who don't. The proposed WGL project will severely degrade the area for all of those not coming here to golf.

I have enjoyed many other Washington State Parks during my travels. I believe many offer amenities much more useful and enjoyable to a majority of visitors and locals alike. Some welcome additions to the park might be as follows:

- Hiking or biking trails
- Nature/interpretive trails
- Disc Golf (no cost to play, no additional infrastructure needed aside from the course)
- Camping area and/or yurts

I would like to thank you for taking the time to consider my input. I truly love living in this area. I hope we will begin to collectively value this town as well as our park for the beauty and joy that it brings us. While development is always a tempting proposition, we have

the responsibility to do it right and preserve what is best about the area we live and recreate in.

Respectfully, 11

Since 300 acres were acquired with a grant from the Recreation and Conservation Office, it seems to me that turning this public park into a private golf course/resort would negate the conservation aspect of acquiring the land.

I have wandered in these lands and enjoyed them as they are. This park land acts as a natural buffer to the Pacific Ocean and undoubtedly protects inland Westport. This should be a priority, since climate changes bring sea level rise and increased storm intensity, which I have witnessed on Westhaven Beach this winter. The erosion has been astonishing!

In addition to removing natural vegetation which would immediately impact wildlife, maintaining a golf course so close to the coast might pollute the ocean and bay. Besides the removal of vegetation, there would be construction, paving, and water and sewer additions to the land, which could all result in erosion, wind damage, and flooding to the park as well as to the residents and businesses of Westport.

We can learn from what Florida has allowed on coasts: there are very few mangrove wetlands or sand dune buffers remaining along the coasts, resulting in dropped water tables, beach erosion, loss of marine life, flooding. Or we can choose to ignore what has happened to coasts worldwide and wait for nature's payback here on Washington's coast

Washington State Parks does not need to provide recreational opportunities which could be provided by private businesses outside of the park itself. A visitor to this park might also enjoy playing golf, and there are golf opportunities nearby in Aberdeen. Has the financial viability of nearby golf courses been studied? I have heard that golf is not a booming business nearby. What's to stop a private business buying and developing land close to Westport for a golf course? Easier to exploit public property? It's not State Parks' responsibility to provide that type of recreation. Do we want to allow a private enterprise to maintain and preserve our state park? A golf course would change the character of the land as well as the enjoyment so many people already find in our park as it is. I am one of many who choose to enjoy nature on the coast at Westport Light State Park.

There are already many destinations for golf, but not so many destinations for sand dunes, surfing, bird watching, beach-combing, coastal pines, sunsets.

A resort is not a park. A golf course is not a park. The state has other means to encourage profitable business enterprises on private land and should do so in communities like Westport, but not in unique habitats on public land. With so many recent world-wide climate catastrophes, perhaps the Washington State Parks real estate policy needs to be revised in order to preserve rather than destroy ecosystems, so that the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission can care "for Washington's most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives" (from mission statement). And perhaps the City of Westport needs to consider other ways it can enhance the coastal

experience of visitors to this park so that the city can realize financial gains throughout the year, without relying on pipe dreams from corporations looking for profit on public land. ¹²

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Westport Golf Links project. This development represents an extraordinary opportunity to catalyze economic growth in Westport and the surrounding region while enhancing the appeal of one of Washington's most iconic coastal areas.

The Westport Golf Links, designed by world-renowned golf architect David McLay-Kidd, promises to establish Westport as a premier global destination. As one of only five true Scottish Links-style courses in the United States, this project will attract thousands of avid golfers and their families from around the world. These visitors will not only spend money at the course but also support local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, shops, and tour operators.

The economic ripple effects will be substantial:

• Increased Tourism Revenue:

- Westport will see year-round tourism growth, diversifying the region's economy beyond its seasonal fishing and razor clamming industries. Golfers are known for their willingness to travel and spend, and the Westport Golf Links will position our region as a
- must-visit destination for this high-spending demographic.

Job Creation:

• The project will create hundreds of direct jobs in construction, maintenance, hospitality, and retail, as well as indirect jobs in local supply chains.

• Support for Local Businesses:

 The influx of tourists will drive demand for lodging, dining, shopping, and guided experiences like fishing charters, surfing lessons, and eco-tours, benefiting countless small businesses in Westport and Grays Harbor County.

• Tax Revenue Growth:

 With increased economic activity, local and state tax revenues will rise, allowing for reinvestment in critical infrastructure and community services.

In addition to the economic benefits, the golf course will occupy only a small portion of the park, leaving room for walking trails, birdwatching areas, beach access, and conservation zones. This ensures that visitors of all interests—golfers and non-golfers alike—can enjoy and benefit from the revitalized park.

The public-private partnership driving this project will address critical funding gaps that have left Westport Light State Park and nearby parks like Bottleneck, Twin Harbors, and Grayland underfunded for years. Turning one of our region's most visited parks into a revenue-generating asset is a transformative opportunity, ensuring the sustainability of state parks without placing additional burdens on taxpayers.

The Westport Golf Links project is not just an investment in a golf course; it's an investment in the economic vitality of our community, the future of sustainable tourism, and the preservation of Washington's natural beauty. By approving this project, you will help unlock Westport's full potential as a hub for tourism, recreation, and economic prosperity.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this proposal. I urge you to support the Westport Golf Links project and its vision for a brighter future for our community and region.

Sincerely, 13

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed Westport Golf Links as a means to revitalize not only Westport Light State Park but also Bottleneck, Twin Harbors, and Grayland State Parks. These parks have experienced declining maintenance and conservation efforts due to limited state resources. As a long-time visitor and advocate for Westport's unique natural landscape, I see this golf course project as a critical opportunity to generate resources that will directly benefit environmental and conservation efforts in these parks.

The hard truth is that, under the status quo, these resources are becoming more overgrown and less functional as wetlands. Invasive species such as Scotch Broom and non-native grasses are taking over, leading to the gradual disappearance of functional wetlands. The dunes are subject to significant erosion, which is altering the coastline and creating hazards for visitors. Additionally, the parking and restroom facilities are inadequate for the number of visitors, and a single full-time law enforcement officer is stretched thin, dividing their time between four parks. The current situation is unsustainable.

Fire Mitigation Benefits

A crucial benefit of the proposed project is its potential to mitigate fire risks in the area. Overgrown, unmanaged vegetation—including the invasive Scotch Broom—significantly increases the likelihood of wildfires, which pose a growing threat to coastal communities and ecosystems. The golf course project will incorporate proactive vegetation management, clearing high-risk areas and replacing them with low-flammability native plantings. This management will not only reduce wildfire risks but also improve the overall health of the ecosystem.

Environmental Benefits of the Golf Course

A well-designed, eco-friendly multi-use development will enhance local ecology. The Scottish Links course will integrate natural habitats, creating green corridors and protected areas that benefit wildlife. Native species plantings, natural buffers, and water management systems will support wetland conservation while reducing erosion and stabilizing adjacent habitats. Sustainable water management practices will reduce stormwater runoff and recharge groundwater, addressing current issues of massive fluctuation in water quality.

Key Conservation Features of the Proposed Project

Native landscaping

- that minimizes water usage and promotes pollinator habitats.
- Naturalized buffer zones
- along waterways to protect fragile wetland ecosystems and support local flora and fauna.
- Sustainable water management practices
- to mitigate runoff and maintain water quality.

As a lifelong resident of this beautiful state, I know that one of our greatest assets is our abundance of natural resources and the diversity of places our citizens can enjoy. Managing these resources requires creativity and innovative approaches to our budget. The proposed public-private partnership will not only preserve fragile ecosystems but will also generate far more revenue for the State Parks system rather than require additional resources for maintenance.

With the consistent revenue stream and increased tourism this project can provide, Westport Golf Links represents a transformative opportunity for our state's parks. This is a solution that balances economic growth with ecological preservation, creating benefits for both the environment and the people who cherish it.

It is for these reasons that I urge you to support the proposed project.

Sincerely, 14

Gentlemen,

Attached is a letter to you, stating the Laidlaw Island Hunting Club's position regarding the draft of the Westport Golf Course Project's Environmental Impact Statement section on Off-

site Mitigation showing Laidlaw land as part of the project's wetlands mitigation str ategy.

As stated in this letter:

" there has been no verbal or written agreement between the Laidlaw Board of Directors or any Laidlaw Representative and any representative of the Westport Golf Course Project, and no contact between the two parties since the summ er of 2024 to discuss wetland mitigation projects associated with any Laidlaw p roperties."

Sincerely, 15

To the Washington State Park Commission,

When our grandchildren were small one of the favorite places to take them was the paved trail at the Westport Lighthouse State Park.

With the golf course there the trail will become dangerous to children and others with potential golfballs flying around them.

The trail was constructed many years ago as a handicap accessible trail. With the golf course built the trail will be widened to accommodate maintenance vehicles and golf carts for the handicapped. (I am pretty sure that there will be quite a few golfers who are "handicapped".) So instead of a peaceful place to enjoy nature for people unable to walk on the sand they will now have to watch out for vehicles.

There are several acres of wetlands in the park which are needed for the supply of groundwater.

With a golf course built large amounts of fertilizer will be applied to the fairways. With 82 inches of average rain fall per year fertilizer will undoubtedly seep into the ground water.

I am all for construction of more trails in the park since this is what most people who visit our beaches will plan to do.

With the golf course built more trails will be developed but how accessible will these trails be to the public? It would be irresponsible to let people talk there and be hit by golf balls.

It makes me sad to think a state park at the beach we all pay taxes to so people of all ages and abilities can visit will be turned into a place for an elite sport like golf that few people in our area play or can afford. There are fewer and fewer places in our state where people can take their children just to be in nature, take walks, have picnics and be safe. I appeal to the Washington State Park Commissioners to carefully consider what the consequences are for future generations if we give up a park like Westport Lighthouse State Park to a private company to be used as a golf resort for a proposed 80 year lease. Thank you. ¹⁶