

Cabinet Briefing 2016 Transition



AGENCY NAME

Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO)

AGENCY MISSION

As a responsible steward of public funds, RCO works with its partners to protect and improve the best of Washington's natural and outdoor recreational resources, enhancing the quality of life for current and future generations.

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES AND CORE SERVICES

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) is an exemplary grant management agency that provides leadership on vital natural resource, outdoor recreation, and salmon recovery issues. In doing this RCO:

Supports the work of several boards:

- Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
- Salmon Recovery Funding Board
- Washington Invasive Species Council
- Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group

Manages 21 grant programs that provide millions of dollars to local, state, federal, tribal, and nonprofit organizations for outdoor recreation facilities, critical wildlife habitats, farmland and forestland conservation, and flood control. The grants distribute state and federal money through competitive processes using criteria established by RCO's funding boards. RCO not only manages the process of selecting projects, but also oversees the contracts through the life of each project and monitors the commitments to Washington State for ongoing retention of the facilities and sites.

Coordinates the development of the *State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*, the document that helps decision-makers and recreation providers prioritize the acquisition, renovation, and development of recreational resources statewide and ensure the state's eligibility for federal grants through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Supports the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (GSRO), which coordinates the work of other state, local, and tribal entities to recover salmon populations in Washington State to a healthy, harvestable level, and to improve the habitats upon which salmon rely. RCO is responsible for producing the biennial *State of Salmon and Watersheds* report.

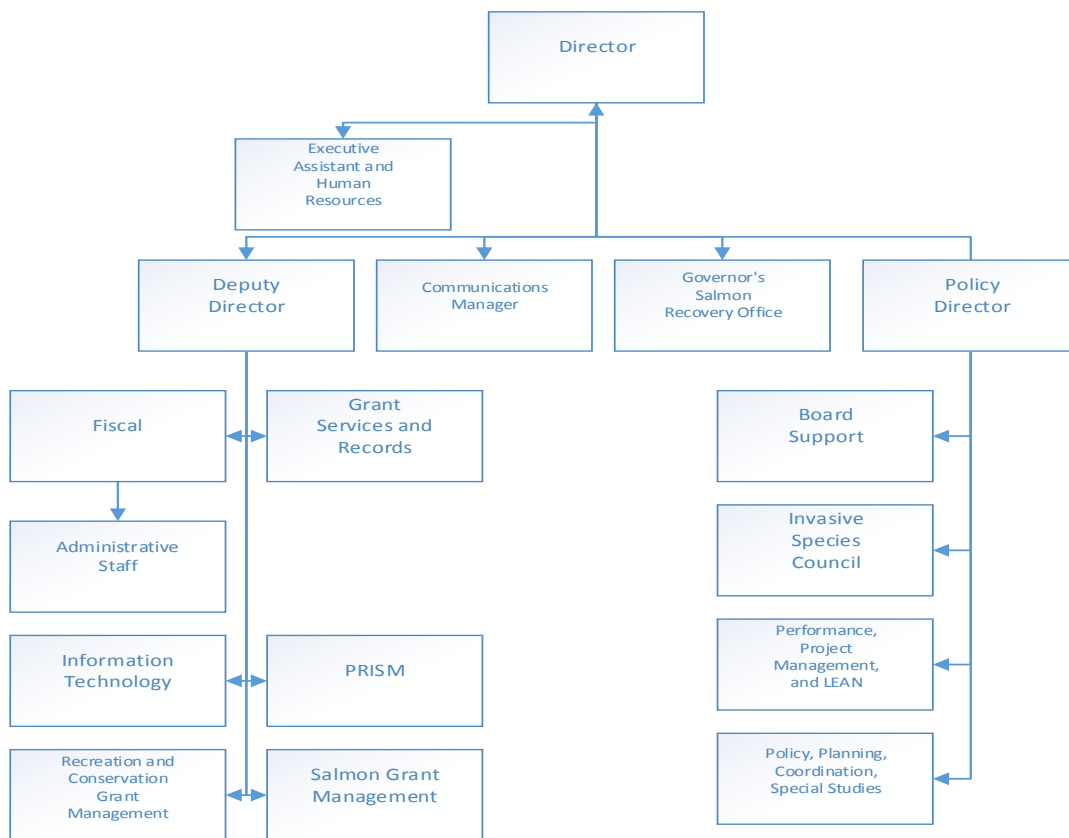
RCO also is responsible for completing plans, studies, and projects as directed by the Governor and the Legislature, such as the [Public Lands Inventory](#), [Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State](#), [Review of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program](#), and [Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation](#).

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

RCO is a small state agency consisting of 55 staff housed in Olympia. A majority of the staff are grants managers who provide hands-on assistance to organizations requesting or receiving grants. Grants are managed through the agency-developed, Web-based Project Information System (PRISM). This system is open to the public to apply for grants, review information on funded grants, and produce reports about projects. PRISM provides:

- Information on more than 11,000 proposed and completed projects
- Paperless applications – online submission of grant applications
- Electronic submittal and payment of bills
- A means to conduct project compliance
- Up-to-date information on the status of applications, contracts, and bills
- Electronic storage of contract documents
- Summary and detailed reports
- Projects can be viewed via the Web at [Project Search](#)

One of RCO's biggest roles is fiscal accountability. RCO's chief financial officer and fiscal team are key to providing oversight and accountability for the expenditure of state and federal funds. The remaining staff support the boards by developing and updating policy recommendations for their consideration, communicate activities with the public and partners, and provide office support operations. Additional agency information can be found at <http://www.rco.wa.gov/about/index.shtml>



BUDGET OVERVIEW

RCO's combined operating and capital budget for 2015-17 (including the supplemental and re-appropriated capital funds) is \$477 million. RCO has two programs:

- Capital program (97.9 percent)
- Operating program (2.1 percent)

The sale of state general obligation bonds funds the capital program, which RCO uses to fund its grant programs for recreation, conservation, and salmon recovery. The capital program also contains funding for a small amount of administration. RCO bases its budget and degree of administrative function on the appropriation for the grant programs. The operating program also funds some grant programs. For example, dedicated state revenues, including a portion of the gasoline tax and vehicle registration fees, support specific recreation facilities for boaters and trail users. The state General Fund (which is 0.35 percent of the RCO budget) supports the director, the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, and pass-through funding for the regional and watershed-based salmon recovery organizations. Federal funds, also distributed via grants, support salmon recovery as well as some recreation grant programs.

	Operating Budget	Capital Budget	Total
2015-17	\$10,029,000	\$467,066,163	\$477,095,163
	2.10%	97.90%	100%
# FTEs	19.5 FTEs	35.5 FTEs	55 FTEs

PRIORITY ISSUES

- **Salmon Recovery:** Secure funding for salmon recovery, including on-the-ground habitat projects, capacity funding for the watershed-based organizations that recruit and review those projects, and other salmon recovery activities that are aimed at bringing salmon back from the brink of extinction.
- **Growth and its Impact on Outdoor Recreation and Conservation:** Ensure that current and future generations have adequate lands and facilities for outdoor recreation and to support abundant fish and wildlife. The state's population is one of the fastest growing, putting pressure on existing outdoor recreation and habitat lands. The grant programs managed by RCO are some of the only funding available to strategically invest for the future.
- **Payment in Lieu of Taxes:** If the next generation is to have adequate space for outdoor recreation and to give wildlife enough land to flourish, the process by which land-owning state agencies calculate "Payment in Lieu of Taxes" (PILT) to local governments must be improved. When a state agency buys land using RCO grants (and other programs), the land is removed from the local tax rolls and put into a non-taxable status. PILT payments from the State are critically important to local governments to offset these shifts in property taxes.
- **Underserved Communities:** Not all communities have equal access to funding for parks and outdoor recreation facilities. Sometimes it's a lack of staff to apply for grants and sometimes it's the inability to provide required matching funds. One of RCO's priorities for the coming year is to identify and implement ways to increase outdoor recreation opportunities in underserved communities.

- **Invasive Species:** Invasive species are plants, animals, or organisms that spread quickly and harm the environment and create economic hardship for critical natural resource industries, such as shellfish, agriculture, timber, hydro-electric power, and recreation. RCO provides staff, funding, and resources to support the Washington Invasive Species Council’s efforts to combat harmful invasive species in Washington State. Two of the current efforts include eradicating any feral pigs in Washington State (through the [Squeal on Pigs](#) campaign) and preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species (through the [Clean, Drain, Dry](#) campaign.)

EXECUTIVE ORDER COMPLIANCE

Of the 23 executive orders issued under Governor Jay Inslee, RCO is complying with 12 through changes in office procedures, updates in policies, and active participation in meetings and/or committees. The remaining 11 do not apply to the RCO.

In compliance:

- 13-01 [Veterans Transition Support](#)
- 13-02 [Improving Employment Opportunities and Outcomes for People with Disabilities in State Government](#)
- 13-04 [Results Washington](#)
- 13-06 [Improving the Health & Productivity of State Employees](#)
- 14-01 [Establishing a Blue Ribbon Task Force to Develop a Transformation Strategy for Outdoor Recreation in Washington State](#)
- 14-02 [Expanding telework and flexible work hours programs to help reduce traffic congestion and improve quality of life](#)
- 14-04 [Washington Carbon Pollution Reduction and Clean Energy Action](#)
- 15-02 [Voter Registration Assistance](#)
- 16-01 [Privacy Protection and Transparency in State Government](#)
- 16-04 [Reaffirming the Interagency Committee of State Employed Women](#)
- 16-06 [State Agency Enterprise Risk Management](#)
- 16-07 [Building a Modern Work Environment](#)

Not applicable:

- 13-03 [Requiring Consideration of Life Cycle and Operating Costs in Public Works Projects](#)
- 13-05 [Implementing the Affordable Care Act](#)
- 14-03 [Establishing the State Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and Their Families](#)
- 14-05 [Establishing the Washington State Justice Reinvestment Taskforce](#)
- 14-06 [Serve Washington](#)
- 15-01 [Establishing a State Advisory Council on Homelessness](#)
- 15-03 [Washington State Partnership Council on Juvenile Justice](#)
- 15-04 [Rescission of Executive Orders](#)
- 16-02 [Firearm Fatality Prevention - A Public Health Approach](#)
- 16-03 [Transforming Services for Children and Families in Washington state](#)
- 16-05 [Building Safe and Strong Communities through Successful Reentry](#)

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2013

- **RCO Celebrates its 50th Anniversary**

In 2014, RCO celebrated its 50th anniversary. It was in November 1964 that voters approved Initiative 215 establishing the Marine Recreation Lands Act, which created our agency to administer the marine fuel tax investments.

- **Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation was created and made recommendations to the Governor**

Gov. Jay Inslee established the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation through [Executive Order 14-01](#). The directive was to develop an action plan and recommendations to manage, transform, better leverage, or develop Washington's outdoor recreation assets and state programs to increase outdoor recreation activities as well as promote the jobs and business associated with outdoor recreation.

The task force journeyed around the state, listened to hundreds of people, and reviewed thousands of comments submitted via e-mail and through an online town hall. The task force submitted its final report to the Governor in September 2014. Some recommendations from the task force have been implemented by the Legislature, including: the hiring of a recreation policy advisor in the Governor's Office and funding several recreation programs, such as State Parks' No Child Left Inside grant program. Additionally, some tax provisions were modified relating to gas tax-funded recreation grant programs.

- **Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State**

The Legislature requested a report to quantify the economic contributions to the state's economy from public lands and outdoor recreation. The report found that, each year, Washingtonians and visitors spend \$21.6 billion on outdoor recreation, supporting many different businesses. Outdoor recreation not only creates jobs and builds businesses, it cuts health care costs, brings families closer together, helps kids learn in school, and protects the environment. To quantify some of the non-market values, the report looked at the value of ecosystem services provided on public recreation lands – clean water, habitat for wildlife, aesthetic beauty, and enhanced recreational experiences. The combined value of these non-market benefits is between \$134 billion and \$248 billion a year. This report was the first comprehensive analysis of the recreation economy in Washington. The complete economic analysis and the *We'll Go Far Outside* brochure on the agency Web page at www.rco.wa.gov/doc_pages/other_pubs.shtml.

- **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Updated**

The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) is RCO's largest grant program and funds a variety of recreation and conservation projects. The legislature directed the RCO to conduct a facilitated review of the program. The review resulted in 11 recommendations that included simplifying the allocation formula, reducing the required percentage of funds going towards land acquisition in several categories, and providing incentives to underserved communities. The RCO proposed legislation (SSB 6227) to update the WWRP statute, which passed with overwhelming support during the 2016 legislative session.

- **Technology Improvements**

RCO strives to be an innovative agency. It has received many acknowledgements for our state of the art technology systems, including our grant management system (called PRISM), *State of the Salmon in Watersheds* report, Habitat Work Schedule database, and the agency’s easy to navigate Web site. Much has changed since 2013 including the following:

- The GSRO’s State of Salmon in Watersheds report went from paper-based to Web-based and for the first time people are able to see how the state’s investment in salmon recovery is working in real time.
- The Public Land Inventory was updated and made spatial and Web-based. The interactive statewide map allows people to select a location and determine which agency owns the land, the number of acres, the main use of the land, and the cost of acquisition if acquired within the past 10 years.
- Developed a mobile app called the “Washington Water Cruiser” that gives boaters information about state-owned boat launches, moorage slips, and pump-outs.
- Developed a mobile app called “WA Invasives” for professionals and the public to rapidly identify and report invasive species. It also is being used as an educational tool for school groups and service organizations.
- The PRISM database for grant management was enhanced to add the ability for grant staff to do the following:
 - Complete inspections electronically in the field.
 - Document issues related to grant-funded projects and enter follow-up tasks.
 - Provide comments to and from applicants online.
 - Receive and manage all bills and invoices online. As of July, RCO has processed more than 3,600 billings, all within 30 days of successful submission.

Projects funded from July 1, 2013-June 30 2016

Program	Number of projects	Dollars awarded	Dollars in match	Total
Salmon	642	\$208,672,609	\$40,629,856	\$249,302,465
Recreation	472	\$117,481,695	\$101,913,326	\$219,395,021
Conservation	105	\$102,582,601	\$30,054,617	\$132,637,218
Office	328	\$114,625,388	\$43,800,562	\$158,425,951
TOTAL	1547	\$543,362,293	\$216,398,361	\$759,760,655

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR UPCOMING YEAR

Agency-wide

- Update the agency’s strategic plan for the 2017-2019 Biennium
- Review and update internal agency policies
- Revamp the agency Intranet page for ease of use and efficiencies
- Continue to enhance PRISM database
- Develop an agency training program on leadership and conflict resolution for all staff

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board

- Continue implementation of legislative changes to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, the agency’s largest grant program
- Produce the next 5-year State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and fold in other required plans (trails, boating, etc.), thus making it a unifying strategy for outdoor recreation.

Salmon Recovery Funding Board

- Work to secure state and federal funding to provide for the continued implementation of the bottom-up approach to fund essential salmon recovery projects

Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office

- Plan and deliver the biennial salmon recovery conference April 2017 in Wenatchee
- Continue to develop the Salmon Recovery Network, a collaboration of salmon recovery partners who will help support salmon recovery

Washington Invasive Species Council

- Review and update the [50 top priority species](#) list, which is the list of the invasive species that pose the greatest threat to the state’s environment, economy, and human health.

KEY PERFORMANCE GOALS

RCO rallies around three organizing principles: Fair and accountable grant management, leadership, and innovative support services. RCO’s work plan is a compilation of the larger efforts the agency will undertake during the current biennium to meets its organizing principles and goals as follows:

Organizing Principle	Goals
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase understanding about the importance of RCO’s investments in conservation, recreation, and salmon recovery. • Actively address emerging or critical issues in natural resources and outdoor recreation.
Fair and Accountable Grant Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide competitive grants efficiently and fairly so that partners can make strategic investments. • Ensure that grants are implemented and maintained efficiently and effectively.

Innovative Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet business needs with strategic communication, policy, business, and technology services. • Ensure boards and councils can make informed and transparent decisions.
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RCO is looking continuously for improvement opportunities (LEAN) within its processes and tasks. The leading indicators that are part of RCO’s LEAN efforts are identified in the work plan. For the complete strategic plan see www.rco.wa.gov/documents/strategy/RCO_Strategic_Plan.pdf.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

RCO works to continually build strong working relationships and strategic partnerships with recreation, conservation, and salmon recovery advocacy groups; associations; federal, state, and local agencies; tribes; and other partners and constituents.

To assist the agency with its work, some of our key strategic partners include:

- The **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition** a nonprofit citizens group that leverages public funds for new state and local parks, wildlife habitat, and farmland preservation. The coalition is a diverse group of more than 280 businesses and community organizations representing a variety of interests including hunters, anglers, hikers, environmentalists, timber companies, and realtors, as well as elected officials.
- The **Washington Association of Land Trusts**, a nonprofit umbrella organization of 24 land trusts and conservancies from across the state. This coalition participates on land acquisition and conservation issues.
- **The Nature Conservancy**, a national organization focused on natural resource and land conservation.
- The **Washington Boating Alliance**, an alliance of boating-related organizations with the mission to develop, advance, and implement positions and proposals to enhance the recreational boating experience in Washington.
- **Washington Trails Association**, the nation's largest state-based hiking nonprofit organization, is the voice for hikers in Washington State. The association protects hiking trails and wild lands, takes volunteers out to maintain trails, and promotes hiking as a fun and healthy way for people to explore the outdoors.
- **Washington Recreation and Parks Association**, an organization that advocates on behalf of about 1,500 park professionals. The mission of WRPA is to promote excellence of current and future parks and recreation professionals through advocacy, education, networking, and training.
- The **Regional Fisheries Coalition**, a statewide network of non-profit, community based, salmon enhancement organizations. Created by the Washington State Legislature in 1990, the Coalition and the individual Regional Fisheries Enhancement groups involve citizen volunteers and landowners in the state’s salmon recovery efforts.

- The **Washington Salmon Coalition** represents the state’s 25 lead entities in their role in salmon recovery. Lead Entities were created in 1997 as part of the early salmon recovery efforts and are local, watershed-based organizations that develop and implement salmon habitat recovery plans through the recruitment and ranking of projects to be funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. Lead entities perform an essential role in salmon recovery in Washington State.
- The **Council of Regions**, formed in 2002, is a forum for Washington's [regional recovery plan](#) leaders to develop solutions to common issues and coordinate implementation of priority salmon recovery projects. There are 7 regions involved in Washington’s efforts to recovery salmon.
- **Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission** is a natural resources management support organization for 20 treaty Indian tribes in western Washington. RCO works closely with the NWIFC in allocating funding to individual tribes for various salmon recovery efforts. The RCO also works closely with individual tribes.
- **Columbia River Inter-Tribal Commission** coordinates management policy and provides fisheries technical services for the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla, and Nez Perce tribes.

Agency-wide local, state, and federal partners:

- Association of Washington Cities
- Washington State Association of Counties
- Washington Public Ports Association
- The Governor’s Office
- Office of Financial Management
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Commerce
- Washington State Conservation Commission
- Department of Ecology
- Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Department of Natural Resources
- State Parks and Recreation Commission
- Puget Sound Partnership
- Department of Transportation
- Environmental Protection Agency
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service

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