
Environment Committee

HB 2226

Brief Description: Concerning state parks partnership opportunities.

Sponsors: Representatives Senn, Fey, Manweller, Tharinger, Zeiger, Morrell, Fitzgibbon, Ryu and Pollet; by request of Parks and Recreation Commission.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides criteria for the Parks and Recreation Commission to enter into agreements with private or public partners for the purpose of stewarding and interpreting state park resources.
- Removes restrictions on commercial advertising in state parks.
- Authorizes the State Parks Foundation to make competitive grants to organizations other than the Parks and Recreation Commission so long as the sole objective of the grant recipient's project is to benefit state parks.

Hearing Date: 1/17/14

Staff: Jacob Lipson (786-7196).

Background:

The State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks) owns and manages a system of over 100 parks with a variety of facilities, historic buildings, and recreation programs. State Parks is managed by a seven member commission appointed by the governor. State Parks is authorized to provide certain environmental interpretive activities for visitors to its parks, such as explanations of historical and cultural connections to park ecosystems.

State Parks may enter into agreements and solicit assistance from private organizations or government agencies in order to conserve and interpret Washington's environment. State Parks is prohibited from allowing private partners to advertise commercially in state park lands or interpretive centers, although State Parks may allow the display of logos and give credit to

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private partners. State Parks may receive gifts, but must account for the gifts it receives and may not use the gifts to increase staffing levels.

Established in 2000, the State Parks Foundation (Parks Foundation) is a nonprofit corporation whose purpose is to support State Parks. The existence of the Parks Foundation is required by state law. The Parks Foundation may make grants to support the activities of State Parks through a competitive process open only to State Parks. The Parks Foundation is governed by a board of up to 15 members, who are elected by Parks Foundation members and serve three-year terms.

In general, the Washington Nonprofit Corporation Act provides rules and requirements on the organization and operation of nonprofit corporations and the relationship between members, directors, and officers of the nonprofit corporation.

Summary of Bill:

The current scope of environmental interpretive activities that State Parks is authorized to provide is expanded to include aspects of parks' natural, cultural, historic, ethnic, artistic, and human heritages. State Parks is authorized to provide interpretive activities that explain the need for the protection and preservation of parks' natural, cultural, and historic resources.

State Parks Partnerships with Other Public and Private Entities.

The previous ban on commercial advertising in parks by private and public partners is removed, and State Parks is allowed to permit commercial advertising. The previous restriction on State Parks' use of gift money to increase park staffing is also lifted.

In addition to public agencies and private entities, Parks may partner with the Parks Foundation, tribes, and employee business units to steward and interpret park resources. Prior to entering a partnership, State Parks must consider the financial viability and expertise of the potential partner organization. State Parks must also consider whether the partnership would produce financial benefits and achieve the State Parks' public purposes. Partnership agreements must include performance measures, the achievement of which is necessary to ensure that State Parks will not end the partnership or seek remedial action prior to extending the partnership.

The Role of the State Parks Foundation.

The Parks Foundation is renamed in statute from the State Parks Gift Foundation. In addition to making competitive grants to State Parks, the Parks Foundation may make grants to friends groups or other organizations that propose projects solely for the benefit of state parks. The terms, method of appointment, and authority of the Parks Foundation's board of directors are made to conform with the state's Nonprofit Corporation Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 14, 2014.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.