

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2138

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans

**Title:** An act relating to promoting outdoor learning in state parks.

**Brief Description:** Promoting outdoor learning in state parks.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Rule, Barkis, Senn, Simmons, Ramel, Paul, Riccelli, Doglio and Reeves.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans: 1/17/24, 1/26/24 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) to consider design elements that support outdoor learning when developing certain capital projects.
- Requires the Commission to assist with coordinating outdoor education events in state parks.
- Requires the Commission to conduct a survey of facilities within state parks that may be used for outdoor educational purposes.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON INNOVATION, COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, & VETERANS**

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Donaghy, Vice Chair; Rule, Vice Chair; Volz, Ranking Minority Member; Barnard, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Christian, Cortes, Senn, Shavers, Street and Wilcox.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Staff:** Emily Poole (786-7106).

**Background:**

Parks and Recreation Commission.

The Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) is tasked with caring for and supervising the state parks. The Commission's duties include enforcing rules pertaining to the use of state parks, permitting the use of state parks by the public, erecting structures and comfort stations, and building and maintaining trails. The Commission is required to maintain policies that increase the number of people who have access to free or low-cost recreational opportunities for physical activity.

The Outdoor Learning Grant Program.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) administers the Outdoor Learning Grant Program (Program), which supports educational experiences for public school students. Through the Program, the OSPI awards grants to eligible school districts, federally recognized tribes, and outdoor education providers.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

Parks and Recreation Commission Duties.

When developing capital projects for new or existing structures and facilities, the Commission is required to consider design elements that support outdoor learning opportunities.

The Commission is required to coordinate with the OSPI, school districts, outdoor education program providers, and grantees to assist with coordinating outdoor education events in state parks.

Survey of Facilities.

The Commission must conduct a survey of facilities within state parks that may be used for outdoor educational purposes. In conducting the survey, the Commission must assess:

- current policies and use of state park retreat centers and environmental learning centers;
- the needs of the OSPI, school districts, outdoor learning program providers, and tribes for outdoor learning facilities;
- the current condition of and necessary upgrades to state park retreat centers and environmental learning centers;
- the development of dedicated funding to support upgrades to state park retreat centers and environmental learning centers; and
- best practices and considerations for the development, maintenance, and use of outdoor learning facilities.

The Commission must submit a report on the outcomes of the completed survey to the Legislature by June 30, 2025.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute extends the due date of the report by the Commission regarding the completed survey from December 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Outdoor educational programs have favorable and effective outcomes. Washington needs to have infrastructure in parks that can support outdoor educational programs. This bill presents an opportunity to do a survey and understand what the next steps should be in supporting outdoor education.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) There is a growing demand for outdoor education. Outdoor learning programs and community groups benefit from using outdoor educational facilities. Many facilities managed by the Commission are quite rustic or have been closed. The Commission previously hosted more residential programs in the 1950s and 1960s. Commission staff are in high demand, and the Commission is low on staff to support outdoor trips. This bill provides the Commission with the chance to understand the growing landscape of outdoor education. The bill should provide more time for the survey to be completed.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Alicia Rule, prime sponsor.

(Other) Owen Rowe, State Parks and Recreation Commission.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.