

RCW 79.10.500 Recreational trail policy—Development. (1) The department must develop and implement, through an inclusive stakeholder process managed by the department, an official recreational trail policy that is consistent with this section and the management mandate of the department.

(2) (a) The recreational trail policy developed by the department under this section must provide that recreational trails be developed and managed in a manner that ensures the following principles are satisfied:

(i) Causing the least impact to the land;
(ii) Providing environmental and water quality protection; and
(iii) Maintaining the lowest construction and maintenance costs that are reasonable.

(b) The department should use trail standards developed by the United States forest service as primary guidelines for trail construction and maintenance. However, the department must develop its own construction standards and best management practices when the primary guidelines are deemed insufficient or inapplicable.

(c) Trails developed or maintained consistent with a recreational trail policy developed under this section must comply with Title 79 RCW and all applicable state laws and rules, including those administered by the department of ecology.

(d) After developing the recreational trail policy required in this section, and when developing or assessing recreational trail systems, the department should evaluate existing nondesignated trails for compliance with trail standards and incorporate those trails, when compliant and consistent with the standards, into comprehensive recreational management plans.

(3) When appropriate, the department should incorporate public input on new and existing trail systems, and if deemed appropriate, the department should support formal or informal public forums to allow members of the local community to share concerns and ideas or organize themselves for volunteer trail maintenance.

(4) (a) A recreational trail policy developed by the department under this section must provide for the department to enter into a hold harmless agreement with all volunteers coordinating with the department under the policy or enter into other agreements that limit the department's liability from the actions of volunteers.

(b) Whenever volunteers or volunteer organizations are authorized to perform activities or carry out projects under this subsection, the volunteers or members of the organizations may not be considered employees or agents of the department and the department is not subject to any liability whatsoever arising out of volunteer activities or projects. The liability of the department to volunteers and members of the volunteer organizations is limited in the same manner as provided for in RCW 4.24.210. [2014 c 114 § 2.]

Finding—2014 c 114: "The legislature finds that the citizens of the state will benefit from a coordinated effort to plan recreational trails on land managed by the department of natural resources that are accessible by the greatest number of people and are constructed to standards that are consistent statewide. The legislature recognizes that demand for outdoor recreational opportunities continues to expand while the places to enjoy outdoor recreation has diminished due to changes in private landownership and reduced access to federal lands that resulted from a reduction in federal forest road networks. As a

result, the public has greater expectations of state-owned land for recreational use. Therefore, greater emphasis on policies that secure recreational access are needed, for public health and safety, as well as for maintaining protections for the state-owned land that are subject to the recreation so that the interests of current and future generations are afforded the same opportunities." [2014 c 114 § 1.]