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## Environment Committee

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### HB 2151

**Brief Description:** Concerning recreational trails.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Blake and Seaquist.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the State Parks and Recreation Commission to develop and implement separate official recreational trail policies that are tailored to the management mandate of each agency.
- Exempts portions of trail construction and maintenance from any local permitting requirements.

**Hearing Date:** 1/17/14

**Staff:** Jason Callahan (786-7117).

#### Background:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks) are charged with managing the public lands of the state. The WDFW owns or manages nearly one million acres of public land for fish and wildlife, habitat conservation, and wildlife-related recreation. In addition, the Washington park system includes 119 developed parks.

The DNR manages nearly three million acres of uplands and over two million acres of aquatic lands. Although each individual land holding is managed by the DNR for a specific benefit or purpose, the concept of multiple use management covers all DNR-managed land.

The idea of "multiple use" means the provision of several uses simultaneously on the same tract of land (RCW 79.10.110). Outdoor recreation, in all of its various forms, is one of the multiple uses that the DNR is directed to provide when the recreation does not negatively impact the

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underlying land management purposes (RCW 79.10.120). Many lands managed by the DNR are used for hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and motorized vehicle riding.

In implementing the multiple use mandates, the DNR is authorized to plan, construct, and operate recreational areas, trails, and facilities for educational, scientific, or experimental purposes (RCW 79.10.130). These activities may be carried out in conjunction with any other public or private agency. The DNR may enter into contracts, leases, or other agreements as necessary to implement its various mandates.

**Summary of Bill:**

The DNR, WDFW, and Parks (three agencies) must develop and implement separate official recreational trail policies that are tailored to the management mandate of each agency. Each policy must consider recreational trails to be a temporary land use and use the lowest possible construction costs when being developed. The initial policies must be adopted by October 31, 2015.

When possible, the three agencies must use trail standards developed by the United States Forest Service as the primary guidelines for trail construction and maintenance. The three agencies must also attempt to incorporate existing, user-built trails into their trail systems and give trail development priority use on any former mining sites located on land owned by the three agencies.

Trails developed consistent with the policies of three agencies are required to satisfy all permit requirements of the DFW and the Department of Ecology. However, these trails are exempt from any local permitting except for trail heads, parking lots, permanent structures, and sanitation facilities.

In addition to trail construction, the trail policies developed by the three agencies must include guidelines for trail use, including use for organized events and competitions. Organized competitions must be limited to no more than four events per year at any one location, and the group organizers are required to cover insurance, be responsible for maintenance and restoration after the event, and share a portion of the event's gate fee with the host agency.

The three agencies must also hold regular community public forums on trail management in areas where trails exist or are proposed so that members of the public can share concerns and ideas or organize themselves for trail maintenance. In addition, the three agencies must create one volunteer support and design team (team) in each area with a trail. Each team must have five members representing different trail user groups. To be eligible for service on a team, a person must be able to document at least five years of continued participation in their assigned user activity. The teams must be used by the three agencies to provide information as to the public's desired use of trails and the three agencies must give deference to the recommendations of the teams.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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