H-2407.1

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**HOUSE BILL 2138**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Rule, Barkis, Senn, Simmons, Ramel, Paul, Riccelli, Doglio, and Reeves

AN ACT Relating to promoting outdoor learning in state parks; amending RCW 79A.05.030 and 79A.05.035; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 79A.05.030 and 2020 c 123 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

The commission shall:

(1) Have the care, charge, control, and supervision of all parks and parkways acquired or set aside by the state for park or parkway purposes.

(2) Adopt policies, and adopt, issue, and enforce rules pertaining to the use, care, and administration of state parks and parkways. The commission shall cause a copy of the rules to be kept posted in a conspicuous place in every state park to which they are applicable, but failure to post or keep any rule posted shall be no defense to any prosecution for the violation thereof.

(3) Permit the use of state parks and parkways by the public under such rules as shall be adopted.

(4) Clear, drain, grade, seed, and otherwise improve or beautify parks and parkways, and erect structures, buildings, fireplaces, and comfort stations and build and maintain paths, trails, and roadways through or on parks and parkways. When developing capital projects for new or existing structures and facilities, the commission must consider design elements that support outdoor learning opportunities.

(5) Grant concessions or leases in state parks and parkways upon such rentals, fees, or percentage of income or profits and for such terms, in no event longer than eighty years, except for a lease associated with land or property described in RCW 79A.05.025(2)(b) which may not exceed ((~~sixty-two~~)) 62 years, and upon such conditions as shall be approved by the commission.

(a) Leases exceeding a ((~~twenty-year~~)) 20-year term, or the amendment or modification of these leases, shall require a vote consistent with RCW 79A.05.025(2).

(b) If, during the term of any concession or lease, it is the opinion of the commission that it would be in the best interest of the state, the commission may, with the consent of the concessionaire or lessee, alter and amend the terms and conditions of such concession or lease.

(c) Television station leases shall be subject to the provisions of RCW 79A.05.085.

(d) The rates of concessions or leases shall be renegotiated at five-year intervals. No concession shall be granted which will prevent the public from having free access to the scenic attractions of any park or parkway.

(6) Employ such assistance as it deems necessary. Commission expenses relating to its use of volunteer assistance shall be limited to premiums or assessments for the insurance of volunteers by the department of labor and industries, compensation of staff who assist volunteers, materials and equipment used in authorized volunteer projects, training, reimbursement of volunteer travel as provided in RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060, and other reasonable expenses relating to volunteer recognition. The commission, at its discretion, may waive commission fees otherwise applicable to volunteers. The commission shall not use volunteers to replace or supplant classified positions. The use of volunteers may not lead to the elimination of any employees or permanent positions in the bargaining unit.

(7) By majority vote of its authorized membership, select and purchase or obtain options upon, lease, or otherwise acquire for and in the name of the state such tracts of land, including shore and tide lands, for park and parkway purposes as it deems proper. If the commission cannot acquire any tract at a price it deems reasonable, it may, by majority vote of its authorized membership, obtain title thereto, or any part thereof, by condemnation proceedings conducted by the attorney general as provided for the condemnation of rights-of-way for state highways. Option agreements executed under authority of this subsection shall be valid only if:

(a) The cost of the option agreement does not exceed one dollar; and

(b) Moneys used for the purchase of the option agreement are from (i) funds appropriated therefor, or (ii) funds appropriated for undesignated land acquisitions, or (iii) funds deemed by the commission to be in excess of the amount necessary for the purposes for which they were appropriated; and

(c) The maximum amount payable for the property upon exercise of the option does not exceed the appraised value of the property.

(8) Cooperate with the United States, or any county or city of this state, in any matter pertaining to the acquisition, development, redevelopment, renovation, care, control, or supervision of any park or parkway, and enter into contracts in writing to that end. All parks or parkways, to which the state contributed or in whose care, control, or supervision the state participated pursuant to the provisions of this section, shall be governed by the provisions hereof.

(9) Within allowable resources, maintain policies that increase the number of people who have access to free or low-cost recreational opportunities for physical activity, including noncompetitive physical activity.

(10) Adopt rules establishing the requirements for a criminal history record information search for the following: Job applicants, volunteers, and independent contractors who have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults, or who will be responsible for collecting or disbursing cash or processing credit/debit card transactions. These background checks will be done through the Washington state patrol criminal identification section and may include a national check from the federal bureau of investigation, which shall be through the submission of fingerprints. A permanent employee of the commission, employed as of July 24, 2005, is exempt from the provisions of this subsection.

**Sec.**  RCW 79A.05.035 and 1999 c 249 s 303 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The commission shall:

(a) Manage timber and land under its jurisdiction to maintain and enhance aesthetic and recreational values;

(b) Apply modern conservation practices to maintain and enhance aesthetic, recreational, and ecological resources; ((~~and~~))

(c) Designate and preserve certain forest areas throughout the state as natural forests or natural areas for interpretation, study, and preservation purposes; and

(d) Coordinate with the office of the superintendent of public instruction, school districts, outdoor education program providers, and grantees to assist with coordinating outdoor education events in the parks.

(2) Trees may be removed from state parks:

(a) When hazardous to persons, property, or facilities;

(b) As part of a park maintenance or development project, or conservation practice;

(c) As part of a road or utility easement; or

(d) When damaged by a catastrophic forest event.

(3) Tree removal under subsection (2) of this section shall be done by commission personnel, unless the personnel lack necessary expertise. Except in emergencies and when feasible, significant trees shall be removed only after they have been marked or appraised by a professional forester. The removal of significant trees from a natural forest may take place only after a public hearing has been held, except in emergencies.

(4) When feasible, felled timber shall be left on the ground for natural purposes or used for park purposes including, but not limited to, building projects, trail mulching, and firewood. In natural forest areas, first consideration shall be given to leaving timber on the ground for natural purposes.

(5) The commission may issue permits to individuals under RCW 4.24.210 and 79A.05.090 for the removal of wood debris from state parks for personal firewood use.

(6) Only timber that qualifies for cutting or removal under subsection (2) of this section may be sold. Timber shall be sold only when surplus to the needs of the park.

(7) Net revenue derived from timber sales shall be deposited in the state parks renewal and stewardship account created in RCW 79A.05.215.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the state parks and recreation commission must conduct a survey of facilities within state parks that may be used for outdoor educational purposes.

(2) In conducting the survey, the state parks and recreation commission must assess:

(a) Current policies and use of state park retreat centers and environmental learning centers;

(b) The needs of the office of the superintendent of public instruction, school districts, outdoor learning program providers, and tribes for outdoor learning facilities, including state park retreat centers and environmental learning centers;

(c) The current condition of and necessary upgrades to state park retreat centers and environmental learning centers;

(d) The development of dedicated funding to support upgrades to state park retreat centers and environmental learning centers; and

(e) Best practices and considerations for the development, maintenance, and use of outdoor learning facilities.

(3) The state parks and recreation commission must submit a report on the outcomes of the completed survey to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2024.

(4) The state parks and recreation commission may contract for all or a portion of the survey required in this section.

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