



NOVA Account Raid Puts Trail Maintenance in Jeopardy

By Rep. Dan Kristiansen
Guest Writer For The Trailhead News

During the 2009 legislative session majority party leaders crafted a nearly \$35 billion state operating budget that was balanced by raiding numerous pots of money, including an important one to trail users -- the Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) account.

NOVA was created by off-road vehicle (ORV) users to provide grants to develop, maintain and manage trails and nonhighway road systems. A fuel-use study in 1972 estimated 4.6 percent of the state fuel tax was generated by ORV use. In lieu of receiving a fuel-tax refund, ORV users asked the Legislature in 1973 to put the money into this special account.

NOVA has been a great program for every type of trail user, including ORV'ers, mountain bikers, hikers and back country horsemen. More than \$76 million has been provided through NOVA for over 1,000 projects throughout Washington. Grant recipients have also voluntarily contributed more than \$27 million in matching resources.

ORV users voluntarily waived their rights to a fuel-tax refund so that they could benefit statewide from this program. Two years ago, they asked the Legislature to more than double ORV-use permit fees to supplement that fund. That's why many are angry that the Democrat operating budget empties \$9.56 million from NOVA funds and appropriates that money "to the state Parks and Recreation Commission for maintenance and operation of parks and to improve accessibility for boaters and off-road vehicle users." (Language from **House Bill 1244**, operating budget)

Unfortunately, NOVA funds will be used to keep state parks open. As a result, no NOVA grants will be available for the coming two years.

My family and I are avid ORV recreationalists. I understand how important this fund is to the many people who enjoy the back trails of Washington. Raiding of NOVA money is one of the many reasons why I voted against the operating budget.

What affect will this transfer have? As one Eastern Washington newspaper reported, "Many of the state's trail systems may be lost to underbrush, overuse and, eventually, a chaos of downed trees. Lost too will be the majority of the seasonal trail-crew workers who keep this region's National Forest lands from falling into such disrepair."

There were better ways of saving state parks. I supported an amendment that would have transferred \$25 million from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) into parks operations. Most of WWRP funds go into land acquisition. I questioned why we were purchasing land for new parks when we cannot maintain existing ones. This amendment could have prevented the NOVA raid. Unfortunately, it failed.

So what's next?

The state Parks and Recreation Commission now has authority over these funds, which in **HB 1244** is to be used partially "to improve accessibility for...off-road vehicle users." If we are to save Washington's ORV and horse trails, the commission must be made aware and held accountable. If you have concerns about the use of these funds, let the commissioners know. The commission is scheduled to meet Aug. 6 in the Tri-Cities, Oct. 1 in Spokane, and Dec. 3 in Centralia. More information is available at the commission's Web site at: <http://www.parks.wa.gov/agency/commissionmeetings>. 🐾

EDITOR'S NOTE: State Rep. Dan Kristiansen, R-Snohomish, represents the 39th Legislative District, and also serves as chairman of the Washington House Republican Caucus. He can be contacted at (360) 786-7967 or from his Web site at: www.housepublicans.wa.gov/Kristiansen.

(More information on page 5)

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ESHB 1244 (NOVA Account Raid) Companion Bill, SB 5600 Operating 2007-09 & 2009-11

House Vote on Final Passage, 4/24/2009

Yeas: 54 Nays: 42 Absent: 0 Excused: 2

Voting Yea (take NOVA money)(Democrats):

Representatives Appleton, Blake, Carlyle, Chase, Clibborn, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dickerson, Dunshee, Eddy, Ericks, Finn, Flannigan, Goodman, Green, Haigh, Hudgins, Hunt, Hunter, Hurst, Jacks, Kagi, Kelley, Kenney, Kessler, Kirby, Liias, Linville, Maxwell, McCoy, Moeller, Morrell, Morris, Nelson, O'Brien, Ormsby, Orwall, Pedersen, Pettigrew, Probst, Quall, Roberts, Rolfes, Santos, Seaquist, Springer, Takko, Upthegrove, Van De Wege, Wallace, White, Wood, and Mr. Speaker.

Absent: None

Excused: Representatives Armstrong and Short

Voting Nay (leave NOVA money) (Republicans):

Representatives Alexander, Anderson, Angel, Bailey, Campbell, Chandler, Condotta, Cox, Crouse, Dammeier, DeBolt, Driscoll, Ericksen, Grant-Herriot, Haler, Hasegawa, Herrera, Hinkle, Hope, Johnson, Klippert, Kretz, Kristiansen, McCune, Miloscia, Orcutt, Parker, Pearson, Priest, Roach, Rodne, Ross, Schmick, Sells, Shea, Simpson, Smith, Sullivan, Taylor, Walsh, Warnick, and Williams.

NOTE: Democrats voting against measure were Reps. Driscoll, Grant-Herriot, Hasegawa. Miloscia, Sells, Simpson, Sullivan and Williams.

Senate Vote on 3rd Reading & Final Passage, 4/25/09

Yeas: 29 Nays: 20 Absent: 0 Excused: 0

Voting Yea (take NOVA money)(Democrats):

Senators Berkey, Brown, Eide, Fairley, Franklin, Fraser, Hargrove, Hatfield, Haugen, Hobbs, Jarrett, Kastama, Kauffman, Keiser, Kilmer, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Marr, McAuliffe, McDermott, Murray, Oemig, Prentice, Pridemore, Ranker, Regala, Rockefeller, Shin, and Tom.

Absent: None

Excused: None

Voting Nay (leave NOVA money) (Republicans):

Senators Becker, Benton, Brandland, Carrell, Delvin, Hewitt, Holmquist, Honeyford, Jacobsen, King, McCaslin, Morton, Parlette, Pflug, Roach, Schoesler, Sheldon, Stevens, Swecker, and Zarelli.

NOTE: Democrats voting against measure were Senators Jacobsen and Sheldon.

Why are we buying more parks when we don't have enough money to maintain the parks we have? Call your local legislators and ask them this question! If you don't know how to contact them, call or email Bob Brooke, BCHW Legislative Chair, at 253.846.1958 or legislative@bchw.org

REMINDER: Register at all Trailheads!

As a user group, horse and mule riders are small in numbers compared to hikers, bicyclists and motorized. That is why we need to make sure that we are counted when using our public lands. If we do not include ourselves by registering as a user of a specific trail or camp-

ground then we as stock users and our needs will not be taken into account when it comes time for any evaluations of those trails or facilities by the land managers. Keep a couple of blank forms in your glove compartment in case the registration box at a trailhead is out. 2