

# STATE BOARD OF LAND COMMISSIONERS

April 16, 2024  
Information Agenda

## Subject

Idaho Outdoor Recreation Fund Advisory Council Recommended Projects

## Background

Idaho has always been an outdoor recreation destination, but in recent years the state has seen a substantial surge in outdoor recreational activities by both a growing resident population and non-resident visitors. The demand for access and opportunity on public lands, endowment lands, state parks, and in some instances private lands for hunting, fishing, trail riding, camping, and whitewater sports has risen significantly in recent years. This growth has placed strain on local communities that may not have the resources to accommodate the increasing demand.

To help alleviate this pressure, in 2023 Governor Little created the Outdoor Recreation Fund Advisory Council (Council) through Executive Order 2023-03, to expand recreational access and opportunity on state lands and other public lands in Idaho (Attachment 1). The Executive Order directs the Council to recommend outdoor recreation projects to the Governor and Idaho Parks and Recreation Board (Parks Board) to be funded from \$5 million allocated through the FY2024 Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation budget.

## Discussion

The Council met several times in late 2023 to evaluate proposals from various organizations to help expand recreational access and opportunity in Idaho. The Council provided its recommendations to the Governor for consideration, who then submitted his comments and final recommendations to the Parks Board for approval (Attachment 2). The Parks Board review and approval is pending. Several of the recommended projects include state endowment lands, and are as follows:

### 1. East Fork Rock Creek, Power County: \$1,000,000

This project will improve recreational access and camping opportunities on heavily used state endowment lands along Rock Creek near Rockland, Idaho. Primitive campsites, restroom facilities and picnic facilities will be developed to provide for better opportunity and minimize resource damage.

### 2. Henrys Lake State Park Expansion, Fremont County: \$750,000

This funding will allow the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) to expand overnight camping opportunities on state endowment land adjacent to Henrys Lake State Park. This area has seen increasing use given its proximity to

Yellowstone National Park. If awarded a lease following the auction process overseen by the Idaho Department of Lands (Department), IDPR will begin the design work for the expanded campground.

**3. Cooperative Management Recreation Area, Eastern Idaho Grazing Association: \$300,000**

Motorized recreation management has become a challenge on more than 70,000 acres of mixed ownership in the East Idaho Uplands, which includes predominantly state endowment lands and lands owned by the Eastern Idaho Grazing Association (EIGA). This funding will allow the Department, IDPR, Idaho Department of Fish and Game and EIGA to work together to develop a travel management plan for these lands which will likely include road and trail designations, signage, kiosks, and route decommissioning and restoration.

**4. White Pine Heights Public Access Easement, Valley County: \$300,000**

The White Pine Heights and Lick Creek endowment land parcels are approximately 85 acres combined and are surrounded by Ponderosa State Park and private development. Given the difficulty of meeting the hurdle rate for timber on these properties, these parcels have been identified for possible reclass and disposal through the Payette Endowment Lands Strategy (PELS). This project would fund up to \$300,000 (depending on appraisal) for the Department to sell a public right-of-way easement between the two properties to allow for improved public access to Ponderosa State Park.

## **Attachments**

1. Executive Order 2023-03
2. Governor's letter to Idaho Parks Board, dated February 27, 2024



Executive Department  
State of Idaho

State Capitol  
Boise

**EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
STATE OF IDAHO  
BOISE**

**EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 2023-03**

**IDAHO OUTDOOR RECREATION FUND ADVISORY COUNCIL**

*WHEREAS, Idaho is experiencing a surge in outdoor recreation with historic numbers of users visiting State Parks, hiking, biking and riding trails, boating, using off-highway vehicles, and hunting and fishing on public and private lands; and*

*WHEREAS, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis estimates outdoor recreation provides a \$2.8 billion annual boost to Idaho's economy, supporting more than 37,000 jobs and fueling rural economies throughout the state; and*

*WHEREAS, this dramatic uptick in outdoor recreation creates opportunities and challenges as Idaho must contend with serving the needs of millions of new recreationists while also preserving and protecting the special places and natural features that make Idaho's outdoors great; and*

*WHEREAS, the State of Idaho recognizes the unintended impacts outdoor recreation can have on rural Idaho, lacking the infrastructure, resources, and revenue streams to support increased recreationists; and*

*WHEREAS, continued investment, support and coordination is key to the successful and responsible growth of outdoor recreation in Idaho.*

*NOW, THEREFORE, I, Brad Little, Governor of the State of Idaho, pursuant to the Constitution and laws of Idaho, hereby recognize the Idaho Outdoor Recreation Fund Advisory Council as a group to expand access and opportunities on state and other public lands in Idaho.*

1. *The Council will advise the Governor and the Idaho Parks and Recreation Board on projects and policies that support expanded access to outdoor recreation opportunities in Idaho.*
  - a. *The Council will recommend projects that expand opportunities for camping, fishing, hunting, accessing trails and other outdoor pursuits by utilizing \$5 million from Senate Bill 1196 in the Fiscal Year 2024 Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Budget for inter-agency collaborative projects.*
  - b. *Specifically, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Idaho Department of Lands will work together to propose projects, manage under-utilized resources to enhance recreational access, and monetize outdoor recreation for long-term sustainability.*
2. *The duties of the Council are advisory to the Governor and the Idaho Parks and Recreation Board to develop additive outdoor recreation access and capacity in the State of Idaho. Final action on the proposals accepted by the Governor shall be presented to the Idaho Parks and Recreation Board for review and approval.*
3. *The Council will focus on statewide outreach and educational efforts to create a better understanding of the importance of where outdoor recreation opportunities are most needed, geographically.*
4. *The Idaho Parks and Recreation Board shall set forth criteria for projects considered by the Council.*
5. *The following thirteen (13) members are hereby appointed to the Council and will serve at the pleasure of the Governor:*
  - a. *Director of the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation or their designee*
  - b. *Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game or their designee*
  - c. *Director of the Idaho Department of Lands or their designee*

- d. Representative of the Idaho State Senate
- e. Representative of the Idaho State House of Representatives
- f. Representative of the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission
- g. Representative of rural Idaho communities
- h. Representative from the recreation community
- i. Representative from the sportsmen community
- j. Representative from the agricultural community
- k. Representative from the forestry or mining community
- l. Representative from the business community
- m. Representative from the conservation community
  - i. The Governor will appoint one (1) non-agency Council member to serve as Chairman.
  - ii. Non-agency members will be appointed by the Governor and serve at the pleasure of the Governor.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Idaho at the Capitol in Boise on this 26<sup>th</sup> day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred forty-eighth, and of the Statehood of Idaho the one hundred thirty-fourth.

BRAD LITTLE  
GOVERNOR

PHIL MCGRANE  
SECRETARY OF STATE

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF LANDS



**Governor Brad Little**

State Capitol :: Boise, Idaho 83720  
(208) 334-2100 :: gov.idaho.gov

February 27, 2024

Idaho Parks and Recreation Board  
5657 Warm Springs Ave.  
Boise, ID 83716

*RE: Idaho Outdoor Recreation Fund Advisory Council*

Dear Chairman Beckley,

As you and your fellow Parks and Recreation board members are aware, the Idaho Outdoor Recreation Fund Advisory Council (ORFAC) was appropriated \$5 million during the 2023 legislative session. Over the past year, ORFAC received 13 applications to fulfill the mission laid out in Executive Order 2023-03, which largely focuses on expanding and enhancing Idaho's outdoor recreational opportunities and long-term success. Per Executive Order 2023-03, I am providing my comments on nine projects that have been recommended by ORFAC for the board's consideration.

I begin with the proposed projects that have my general support for further consideration by the Parks and Recreation Board.

Regarding the East Fork Rock Creek and Henry's Lake proposals, my support requires two follow-up actions. First, the Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) and Department of Lands (IDL) must provide examples to the Board of other interagency projects that incorporate an "established market rent" to keep our state's endowment whole. Secondly, I ask IDL Director Dustin Miller to present the proposals to the other members of the Land Board or designated staff.

In the Idaho for All proposal, I appreciate the intentions of expanding accessibility for people with disabilities. However, I have concerns about the costs IDPR could be entitled to cover in the long run. Therefore, I recommend the Parks and Recreation Board approve the project, contingent on a study by IDPR staff regarding the estimated costs from expansion of the project, as well as any potential issues that IDPR may foresee with this new feature.

Furthermore, outdoor recreation poses one of the larger risks for the conveyance of aquatic invasive species. The proposal by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture provides ORFAC with the opportunity to recognize the relationship between outdoor recreation and preventing invasive species such as quagga mussels. It would be wise for ORFAC to step into this role and educate fellow recreationists on the key role that messaging and education plays in prevention.

I hold this same sentiment regarding the Cooperative Management Recreation Area proposal. Balancing the relationship of recreation on public and private land needs to be examined as Idaho's population and interest in outdoor recreation grow. Messaging, signage,

**ATTACHMENT 2**



## Governor Brad Little

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and collaboration should help identify the proper measures necessary to accomplish this goal.

On the Horsethief Reservoir proposal, I abstain from further recommendations because my family is an adjacent landowner to the recommended property.

Now, the following proposals I pass along to the Board for further consideration with no recommendation.

The proposal by the Selway-Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation should advise the Board whether personnel costs, which make up a large portion of this proposal, are eligible for ORFAC funding. Also, how will this impact the operations of any licensed outfitters in the area?

I suggest the Board further examine Valley County's Boulder Lake Road proposal. The county's application indicates it will be applying for separate IDPR grant funding for the purchase of a skid steer and snow blower to conduct winter maintenance, rather than incorporating this equipment in its ORFAC proposal. This leaves questions about the opportunity to fulfill the project and bid as currently proposed. Additionally, this is another project that would require outreach to IDL staff regarding an updated lease for the project to keep the endowment whole, as well notification of my fellow members on the Land Board or their designated staff.

Another Valley County project that requires additional conversation is the White Pine Heights proposal. Idaho's Constitution mandates that IDL must maximize revenue on endowment land. Given the location of this property, as well as the sensitive history in the area regarding land use planning, I recommend the Board bring this proposal to the Land Board and IDL staff for further consideration.

The outdoor recreation industry is booming in all corners of the Gem State. However, North Idaho is not represented in these proposals. While I recognize ORFAC is limited in the applications it receives, I encourage further marketing and outreach to North Idaho organizations. Doing so would more fully accomplish my goal for ORFAC, which is to expand outdoor recreation opportunities for the benefit of all Idahoans.

I hope these comments prove to be helpful as you consider projects to fund.

Sincerely,

Brad Little  
Governor of Idaho