I am writing to you today as one of the 90% of Washingtonians who recreate outdoors. I am asking for your support in keeping Washington’s outdoors accessible and enjoyable for all by providing $15 million annually in ongoing funding to reduce the maintenance backlog at three core public lands agencies – Washington State Parks, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Washington Department of Natural Resources.

Visitation to state parks and recreation lands was already increasing pre-COVID, and it skyrocketed during the pandemic. Agencies expect current visitorship to only grow, especially considering the considerable population growth in our state. With more people getting outside, the impacts are noticeable – campgrounds, trails, roads, toilets and other facilities are in critical need of repairs and upgrades.

Yet, the maintenance backlog on state lands has continued to increase while funding has remained static. State agencies estimate that the cost of the current backlog on state lands is $50 million to $75 million annually.

Our state needs to take action now to meet current and future needs.

This is why I am asking for you to support $15 million dollars (operating) annually in ongoing funding to help reduce the maintenance backlog on state parks and recreation lands. The $5 million directed to each of the three agencies – Washington State Parks, Washington Department of Natural Resources and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife - will take the first step in addressing the maintenance and operations shortfall of these agencies.

I have witnessed huge trees blocking trails, damaged privies , overgrown vegetation blocking trails, playground equipment closed due to hazardous conditions, nonexistent signage, as well as limited staff in parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas while hiking. Please, I urge you to fund our public lands so we can save them for our kids and grandkids to enjoy in the future. I thank you for the opportunity to comment.