

Frequently Asked Questions regarding Washington's National Park Fund's Endowments

What are the Basics of the Fund's Endowments? Similar to Mount Rainier, North Cascades, and Olympic National Parks, endowments are investment funds that are intended to last forever. The principal remains intact and the proceeds (earnings from the investment) are used to help fund park priority projects.

Why are Endowments important to our National Parks? We all need money for immediate needs – a roof over our heads, food on the table, etc. We also are wise to plan for the future by putting money in savings like 401ks...money that will eventually return interest that we can depend on to meet future needs. Our parks are no different and our endowments provide a permanent source of funds that can be used for decades to come. Endowments generate revenue that is stable and reliable amid the uncertainty of other revenue streams.

What is the long-term vision for the endowments? Simply stated, growth and investment in the parks. The more Washington's National Park Fund invests, saves, and primarily uses earnings only, the stronger the parks will be. In time, the Fund's hopes and dreams include endowments for trails, youth programs, science and research, search and rescue and more.

How can I make a gift? Gifts to one of the park endowments may be made by giving a cash gift, securities (stocks and bonds), or as a portion of your will or estate planning. You may elect to give a gift in one-time lump sum or pledge a larger gift over a period of years.

How are my gifts to the Endowments stewarded? – Your contributions are thoughtfully and professionally invested and overseen by some of Seattle's finest experts. Washington's National Park Fund is proud to partner with Laird Norton Wealth Management. The Fund chose Laird Norton based in large part to their longstanding history and strong reputation in the Pacific Northwest. Their impressive performance track record and extensive resources make them a perfect match for Washington's National Park Fund.

Laird Norton Trust was founded in 1967, one year prior to the establishment of North Cascades National Park. To this day they actively give back to the community through their own charitable giving program. Our endowments are overseen by Washington's National Park Fund's Finance and Executive Committees. Laird Norton works closely with – and provides ongoing narrative and counsel to – the Fund during times of market volatility.

What are the tax benefits of giving to the Fund's endowments? – There is a federal tax deduction for charitable contributions to our endowments.

Can I choose which park I want to support with my endowment gift? Yes, you may designate a park.

When will my gift start making an impact? At the end of each year, Washington's National Park Fund awards a percentage of the investment earnings to Mount Rainier, North Cascades, and Olympic National Parks top priorities. Our spending policy determines the amount we distribute each year. In 2020, we invested 4% back into the parks' top priorities.

Are Washington's National Park Fund endowments restricted? The vast majority – 84% – of the funds in the endowments are in what is referred to as a quasi-endowment. The funds were put there by the board (“Board Designated”); they provide for the greatest amount of flexibility for the Fund/Parks with flexibility for changing times. Unlike with permanent and term endowments, the board can end its board designation for any reason and remove any or all funds from the quasi-endowment at any time it chooses by a majority vote from the board of directors.

In legal terms, a more specific definition can be found in Statement of Financial Accounting Standards (SFAS) 117: *An organization’s governing board may earmark a portion of its unrestricted net assets as a board-designated endowment (sometimes called “funds functioning as endowment” or “quasi-endowment”) to be invested to provide income for a long but unspecified period. The principal of a board-designated endowment, which results from an internal designation, is not donor restricted and is classified as unrestricted net assets.*

The remaining 16% of the funds are gifts from donors that have been earmarked/restricted to specific areas within the parks.