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STATE OF WASHINGTON

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

October 12, 2007

Topic #10: WWRP Phased Projects – Policy Issue

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Presented By: Myra Barker

Approved by the Director: 

Proposed Action: Decision

Summary

On August 27, Recreation and Conservation Office staff requested comment from interested parties on whether or not to give preference to later stages of multi-phased projects submitted to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. This memorandum summarizes the proposed options and comments, and outlines staff's recommendation for modifications to existing program policies.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends retaining the existing policy of funding the highest quality projects as established through adopted evaluation criteria, with no preference for projects with previously funded phases. However, in the event that two projects have identical evaluation scores (are tied), staff recommends that the subsequent phase of a previously funded project be given preference over the project that has not been phased.

Background

The Washington State Legislature established the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program¹ (WWRP) in 1990. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) adopted policies governing the program. Current policy recommends that agencies planning complex or difficult projects consider phasing or staging the project. Examples of complexity include a high budget, extensive permitting, several costly scope elements, numerous properties, or the need to negotiate with multiple landowners when purchasing property rights. Currently, staged/phased projects in all WWRP categories are subject to the following specific requirements:

¹ WWRP is codified in RCW 79A.15 and WAC 286-27.



- Approval of any single stage is limited to that stage, no approval or endorsement is given or implied toward future stages.
- Each stage must stand on its merits as a viable project.²
- Each stage must be submitted as a separate application.
- Progress and sponsor performance on other grants may be considered by RCFB when making decisions on current project proposals.

Analysis

The arguments for and against giving preference to later stages of multi-phased projects are summarized in Table A below.

Table A. Giving Preference to Later Phases of Previously Funded Projects	
Pros	Cons
If a project only succeeds in an initial phase, for example property acquisition, and is not successful in subsequent phases, the resources spent on acquisition may be perceived as underutilized.	Many of the existing evaluation instruments already reward projects that expand and enhance earlier phases of acquisition and/or development.
If preference is not given, the existing policy could discourage phasing complex projects.	Future phases at a site may not be as high a priority as initially anticipated.
If phasing is not encouraged, complex projects may seek a single large grant, resulting in fewer projects being funded overall.	WWRP is intended to fund the best, highest quality projects, whether or not they are a later phase of a previously funded project.
	Unfair to other applicants (new or un-phased projects) competing for the same funds.
	Some applicants may phase projects thinking that they would have an advantage in the subsequent grant round.
	May result in a smaller amount of funding being available for new projects.
	The performance of the sponsor on earlier phases of the project should be considered before automatic preference is given to a later phase. It would be challenging to develop objective criteria to accomplish this.

² Outdoor recreation projects must also provide a “complete recreation experience.”

Stakeholders commented on four options regarding a preference for funding later phases of multi-phased projects.

- ➔ **Option 1:** Retain current policy of no preference for previously funded projects.

Pros	Cons
Ensures funding the best, highest quality projects; fair to greatest number of applicants. See discussion above.	Does not encourage phased projects and results in risk that later phases of a phased project may not be completed. See discussion above.

- ➔ **Option 2:** One point preference for projects in which a previous phase had been funded within the last two grant cycles.

Pros	Cons
See Table A.	See Table A.

- ➔ **Option 3:** One-point preference for projects in which a previous phase had been funded regardless of timing.

Pros	Cons
See Table A.	See Table A.

- ➔ **Option 4:** Earmark not less than 15% of funding to be awarded to previously funded phased projects. If there were a lack of previously funded projects on the list, any unused portion of the 15% would be distributed to single stage projects.

Pros	Cons
See Table A.	See Table A.
Provides guarantee of funding for at least some phased project(s).	A lower scoring phased project could be funded ahead of a higher scoring non-phased project.

Stakeholder comments were about equal between those favoring a preference and those who favored the current policy requiring each phase to be evaluated on the merits of that phase. Those who favored a preference often qualified it by saying past performance had to be part of the evaluation process. If option 4 were chosen, some stakeholders wanted to see a cap on the percent of funds awarded to phased projects, or suggested phased projects should compete head to head for a discrete percent of the allocation. Some comments said the point preference should be less than one full point, or only available in consecutive years.

Next Steps

Public comments on the proposed options referenced above were distributed to the Board at the September 14 RCFB meeting. Comments received by October 25 on staff's recommendation as presented in this memorandum will be distributed to the Board electronically in advance of the November meeting.

If the Board approves the staff's recommendation, staff will update Manuals #10a, *WWRP Outdoor Recreation Account: Policies and Project Selection*, #10b, *WWRP Habitat Conservation Account: Policies and Project Selection*, and Manual #10f, *WWRP Farmland Preservation Program: Policies and Project Selection* and send out notices to potential applicants and other interested parties. Adopted changes will affect grant requests beginning with the 2008 grant cycle.

Attachment

- Resolution 2007-27

RESOLUTION #2007-27
Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program
Preference for Phased Projects

WHEREAS, Chapter 79A.15 RCW established the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) and authorized the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) to adopt policies and rules for WWRP; and

WHEREAS, the RCFB adopted a policy that recommends that agencies planning complex or difficult projects consider phasing or staging the project; and

WHEREAS, the RCFB desires to maintain the existing policy but give some preference to projects with previously funded phases in instances where two projects have identical evaluation scores (are tied); and

WHEREAS, the RCFB desires to incorporate a change to the policy manuals regarding preference for phased projects; and

WHEREAS, the proposed policy modification has been made available for review and comment by individuals and organizations that have expressed an interest in WWRP; and

WHEREAS, final adoption of this policy revision will be incorporated into Manuals 10a, WWRP *Outdoor Recreation Account: Policies and Project Selection* and 10b, WWRP: *Habitat Protection Account and Riparian Protection Account: Policies and Project Selection*;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that phased projects will not be given preference over projects that are not phased except in the event that two projects have identical evaluation scores (are tied), in which case the subsequent phase of a previously funded project will be given preference over the project that has not been phased; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Recreation and Conservation Office staff is directed to take the necessary steps for implementation of this revision beginning with the 2008 grant cycle.

Resolution moved by: _____

Resolution seconded by: _____

Adopted/Defeated/Deferred (underline one)

Date: November 1, 2007