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STATE OF WASHINGTON

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

October 12, 2007

**Topic #13: Noxious Weed Eradication – Policy Issue**

**Prepared and Presented By:** Kammie Bunes

**Approved by the Director:** *J.F.*

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**Proposed Action:** Decision

**Summary**

On August 27, Recreation and Conservation Office staff requested comment from interested parties on whether or not to increase the maximum amount of acquisition grant funds a sponsor can expend on eradicating noxious weeds on property newly acquired with a Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) grant. This memorandum summarizes the proposed options and comments, and outlines staff's recommendation for modifications to existing program policies.

**Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends increasing the limit from \$75 per acre to \$125 per acre, or \$2,500 per property for properties smaller than 20 acres. This recommendation acknowledges that mobilization costs can be the same for a 5-acre property as they are for a 50-acre property. It also allows for more than \$125 per acre for smaller properties, which may be necessary to cover the actual cost of control. Staff believes this offers some relief for agencies facing increased eradication costs but does not allow an unreasonable amount of funds to go towards this purpose.

**Background**

The RCFB sets policy for eligible incidental costs associated with acquiring property. The 1993-1995 State Capital Budget included a proviso to require state agencies purchasing property rights for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) to comply with the weed control provisions of RCW 17.10. In response to this requirement, in 1994 the Board added initial noxious weed control as an eligible cost item and set a limit of \$75 per acre as the maximum reimbursement for control of noxious weeds on property newly acquired with a RCFB grant. The purpose of the policy is to encourage sponsors to eradicate existing noxious weeds on lands purchased with RCFB grant assistance.



Recently, sponsors have commented that the \$75 per acre limit is not adequate, particularly on smaller properties or those requiring mechanical control in aquatic environments. The policy in question is in Manual #3, *Acquiring Land: Policies*, and only addresses initial noxious weed control as an incidental cost to an acquisition project. It does not limit the amount an applicant can seek for weed control in a development or restoration project.

**Analysis**

Stakeholders commented on the following four options regarding limits to grant awards.

➔ **Option 1:** Increase the limit to \$125 per acre

Pros	Cons
The limit has not been increased since 1994 but the cost of controlling weeds has.	Any increase in funds allowed for weed control will have a corresponding decrease on the amount of funds available for property acquisition.
Increasing the limit allows for more intensive methods of control, such as hand pulling or injection application methods, which may be important on sensitive habitat lands.	Most state agencies already pay a weed assessment or in-lieu tax assessment for weed control and other purposes.
Allowing an increase in the limit spent on controlling weeds on property acquired with WWRP funds allows applicants to address inherited problems. Control of weeds on newly acquired public lands can be seen as a benefit to WWRP, as public land owners will be perceived as having addressed what is a serious problem in some areas of the state.	Weed control is perceived as an M&O issue. Some question if it is an appropriate use of capital funds.
	This may not be enough of an increase to cover actual costs.

➔ **Option 2:** Eliminate the per acre measure and limit cost to \$5,000 per project

Pros	Cons
May allow for actual costs on some properties.	May not be adequate on larger projects.

➔ **Option 3:** Eliminate the per acre measure, and limit cost to \$2,500 per property

Pros	Cons
May allow for actual costs on some properties.	May not be adequate on larger projects.
For a multi-site acquisition project, provides a larger allowance per project than Option 2 would.	

➔ **Option 4:** No change to the current limit of \$75 per acre

Pros	Cons
Avoids an increase in use of WWRP funds for weed control.	Very often is not adequate to meet actual costs, particularly on smaller properties with large mobilization costs or those labor-intensive application methods.

In general, stakeholders expressed that it is time to adjust the limit to more accurately reflect costs. However, it was pointed out there are many variables that effect actual costs for weed control and that neither project nor property size may be useful measures in establishing limits. Some comments called for simply allowing actual costs.

**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 Manual #3, *Acquiring Land: Policies*, 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 2007-29

**RESOLUTION #2007-29**  
**Grant Funds Used for Eradication of Noxious Weeds**  
**in Conjunction with Acquisition Projects**

**WHEREAS**, Title 286 Washington Administrative Code authorizes the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) to adopt policies and rules for acquisition projects; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1994 the RCFB adopted a policy that allowed a maximum limit of \$75 per acre for control of noxious weeds on newly acquired property; and

**WHEREAS**, the costs of noxious weed eradication have increased but the RCFB has not changed the limit on funds that can be used to eradicate noxious weeds since its original adoption; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed policy to increase the limit has been made available for review and comment by individuals and organizations that have expressed an interest in the topic; and

**WHEREAS**, final adoption of this policy revision will be incorporated into Manual 3, *Acquiring Land: Policies*;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the limit for eradication of noxious weeds be increased to \$125 per acre, or \$2,500 per property for properties smaller than 20 acres; 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 2, 2007*