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**STATE OF WASHINGTON**

**RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE**

October 12, 2007

**Topic #6: WWRP Urban Wildlife Habitat – Policy Issue**

**Prepared and Presented By:** Leslie Ryan Connelly **Approved by the Director:** 

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**Proposed Action:** Decision

**Summary**

On August 27, Recreation and Conservation Office staff requested comment from interested parties on possible revisions to the Urban Wildlife Habitat category of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) to increase the number of grant awards to local agencies.<sup>1</sup> This memorandum summarizes the proposed options and comments, and outlines staff's recommendation for modifications to existing program policies.

**Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends dedicating a percentage of the Urban Wildlife Habitat category funds to local agencies. Local agencies would receive 40% of the funds, 40% of the funds would go to state agencies, and 20% of the funds would be "competitive." Competitive funds would be applied in the sequence outlined under Option 1c, which is further described in this memorandum.

**Background**

The Urban Wildlife Habitat category provides funds for protection and enhancement of habitat lands that are in close proximity to metropolitan areas. This category is open to local and state agencies. However, fewer grants have been awarded to local agencies since changes were made to the category in 1994 and 1999. Program information and project evaluation criteria can be found in Manual #10b, *WWRP Habitat Conservation Account and Riparian Protection Account: Policies and Project Selection*.

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<sup>1</sup> Local agencies include cities, counties, federally recognized Native American tribes, special purpose districts, port districts, and other political subdivisions of the state providing services to less than the entire state if legally authorized to acquire and develop public open space, habitat, farmland, riparian habitat, or recreation facilities. RCW 79A.15.010(5)



## Analysis

To address the disparity between local and state agency funding, four options were presented to the public for consideration and comment:

- ➔ **Option 1:** Dedicate a percentage of the Urban Wildlife Habitat category funds to local agencies.
  - 1a. 40% of funds to local agencies and 60% of funds to state agencies,
  - 1b. 50% of funds to local agencies and 50% of funds to state agencies, or
  - 1c. 40% of funds to local agencies, 40% of funds to state agencies, and 20% of funds would be competitive. Competitive funds would be applied in this sequence:
    - Fully fund partially funded local agency project(s)
    - Fully fund partially funded state agency project(s), then
    - Apply any remaining funds to the highest ranked alternate project regardless of sponsor.
  
- ➔ **Option 2:** Modify the evaluation instrument to give the urban-specific criteria additional weight. Currently, the four specific criteria in the Urban Wildlife Habitat category identified in RCW 79A.15.060 are:
  - Population of, and distance from, the nearest urban area
  - Proximity to other wildlife habitat
  - Potential for public use, and
  - Potential for use by special needs populations.
  
- ➔ **Option 3:** Include more people with a local agency perspective on the Urban Wildlife Habitat evaluation team. Currently the make-up of the evaluation team is individuals with expertise in various disciplines. Many of the same team members evaluate Critical Habitat and Natural Areas category projects in addition to those in Urban Wildlife Habitat. Recreation and Conservation Office staff would recruit more local agency representatives to score and evaluate proposals specifically in the Urban Wildlife Habitat category.
  
- ➔ **Option 4:** No change to the existing policy.

A strong majority of the public comment preferred some version of Option 1 above. Although there was not a clear preference between Options 1a and 1c, Option 1b had only one supportive comment.

## 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 proposed policy change, staff will update Manual #10b, *WWRP Habitat Conservation Account: 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 2007-23

**RESOLUTION #2007-23**  
**Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program**  
**Funding Allocation for the Urban Wildlife Habitat Category**

**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 has determined that there is inequity between the funds awarded to local agencies and to state agencies in the Urban Wildlife Habitat category of the Habitat Conservation Account; and

**WHEREAS**, the RCFB desires to incorporate a change to the WWRP policy manual regarding fund allocation in the Urban Wildlife Habitat category in order to increase the funds awarded to local agency projects; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed policy 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 Manual 10b: *WWRP: Habitat Protection Account and Riparian Protection Account: Policies and Project Selection*

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the RCFB hereby adopts Option 1c as outlined in this memorandum for allocation of funds for the Urban Wildlife Habitat category. This option provides 40% of the funds for local agencies, 40% of the funds for state agencies, and the remaining 20% of the funds will be distributed as follows: fully fund partially funded local agency projects, then fully fund partially funded state agency projects, and finally apply any remaining funds to the next highest ranked project(s), regardless of sponsor; 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*