

Meeting Date: March 2010
Title: Recreation and Conservation Grants Management Report
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Approved by the Director:

Proposed Action: Briefing

Grant Cycles

2010 Grants Cycle

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) held two application workshops to provide an overview of the grants available this year.

- The first was held on February 23 in Moses Lake. One hundred people attended.
- The second was held on February 26 in Tacoma. About 260 people attended.

The workshops were attended by representatives from local governments, tribes, nonprofit organizations, federal and state agencies, as well as citizens. Topics covered included: habitat, access to the water, parks, trails, farmland, acquisition, restoration, development, accessibility, and maintenance. We also took additional staff specialists to answer questions about planning eligibility, cultural resources, and salmon grants.

We offered concurrent sessions for applicants based on grant category (parks, trails, habitat, access to the water, and farmland) and grant type (acquisition, restoration, development/ accessibility, and maintenance). Preliminary comments from the client satisfaction survey show that attendees liked this new format. They also appreciated meeting their outdoor grants managers and having time to ask questions about their projects.

The attendance at these workshops compares favorably with previous grant rounds. While the number attending this year is somewhat lower than in 2008, it is likely due to the announcement that we would not be having grant rounds for the NOVA and Boating programs. Here are the workshop attendance numbers:

- 2006 – 335 attendees
- 2008 – 462 attendees
- 2010 – 359 attendees

Grant Outreach Started

We have launched the 2010 grant round for the recreation and conservation programs through a series of workshops, e-mails, and postcards. We have several important messages we are trying to convey:

- Grants are available
- Grant evaluators are needed for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program
- PRISM changes will affect your application

Our approach is two-fold. First, we will use our new “Grant News for Sponsors” section on the Web site (www.rco.wa.gov/grants/grant_news.shtml) as the host for the information and drive folks to that section for details. We want to get our clients used to visiting that section of our Web for breaking news. Second, we will try to reach affected clients at least three times – through news releases, e-mails, post cards, and through our key clients’ annual conferences, newsletters, and e-mail lists.

2009 Grants Cycle

Of the grants awarded by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) in 2009, the following are under agreement:

Funding Date	Grants Funded*	Grants Under Agreement	Programs
July 2009	100	90	WWRP, ALEA
October 2009	10	2	RTP
November 2009	8	6	FARR, LWCF

* Grants funded excludes board alternates, projects moved to “dead” status, and those awaiting federal funding.

Federal approval of funds for the Recreational Trails Program

In October 2009, the board approved a ranked list of 107 projects in the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). In February 2010, the Federal Highways Administration (FHA) approved \$503,840 for our program. These funds, combined with unused funds from previous biennia, have given the RCO enough money to issue 10 of the RTP agreements approved by the board. We hope to receive another \$700,000 from the FHA over the next few months.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

Land and Water Conservation Funds for federal fiscal year 2010 will be used for three projects on the list approved by the board in November. The projects funded include: Mason County’s Oakland Bay County Park, King County’s Tanner Landing Park, and Richland’s Badger Mountain Park. The grant awards total \$517,537.

Staff Activity

Improvements to the PRISM Database

Staff members in the Recreation and the Conservation and Grant Services Sections have been involved in PRISM testing and training since the beginning of the year. Each Monday morning, RCO holds a PRISM meeting with staff to continue to demonstrate and test the new metrics module in PRISM. Staff leave with work to be done by the following Friday. The intent is to ensure that the system works well for applicants, and that staff are ready to provide assistance as needed.

All Grant/Fiscal Retreat

The RCO held a retreat for all staff in the grant and fiscal sections on January 8 in Tumwater. The retreat focused on three main areas:

- Past efforts and accomplishments;
- Priorities for the next 12 to 18 months; and
- Visioning – priorities for the next biennium and beyond.

The all-day meeting generated some interesting discussion and good ideas on what we need to do to become a better grants agency. The day also included an agency overview from the director. Section managers are taking the information obtained during the retreat and developing a plan of priorities that will guide RCO grant management over the next several months.

Excellent Customer Service

The Port of Everett recently announced plans to offer free passes to disabled veterans who want to launch boats at the 10th Street Boat Launch, which was funded with Boating Facilities Program grants.

This announcement resulted in part from some great customer service provided by RCO grant managers Myra Barker and Karl Jacobs.

A local resident, Patrick Forster, contacted the Port of Everett and asked if they could do something special for veterans by offering free passes. The port asked the RCO for guidance on grant program rules that prohibit giving preferential treatment. Myra and Karl responded that board policies address only the issue of preferential treatment for residents versus non-residents, so the port could charge a lower fee to disabled persons or veterans.

The port adopted a launch fee policy that includes special passes for veterans. Mr. Forster was thrilled with the decision and expressed his appreciation to Myra and Karl for their great customer service.

Conversions and Compliance

Grass Lake Conversion, City of Olympia

On September 24, 2008, the City of Olympia asked for board approval to convert two parcels totaling 2.59 acres within Grass Lake Nature Park. The board approved the conversion of 2.47 acres in the park's southwest corner for a city park, but deferred to the Director its decision regarding the remaining 0.12 acre. That conversion would have allowed for a sewer line easement in the park's northeast corner.

The easement requested by the city would convert 0.12 acres and require removal of six mature trees. The board asked the city to provide additional information about the alternative to the conversion. The board also authorized the RCO director to approve the sewer line conversion if the city could demonstrate adequate effort had been made to avoid affecting the park.

The city submitted a thorough analysis of four approaches, in addition to the conversion originally proposed to the board. Ultimately, they proposed an alternative that combined an easement from a willing landowner with an easement from the city. The result is a smaller conversion that will not result in the removal of any mature trees.

Staff believed the city demonstrated a thorough analysis of alternatives and made a strong effort to avoid conversion of parkland. The director approved the proposal on February 10, 2010.

Meeting with the National Park Service

To ensure good communication with key partners, director Kaleen Cottingham and staff met with Michael Linde and Heather Ramsay from the National Park Service to discuss several topics, including:

- Possible additional funding – Funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund program could double in Washington in the upcoming years.
- Staff communication – Communication has increased since 2008 with the hiring of RCO's conversion specialist. Both agencies agree that the more frequent discussion has kept projects moving forward.
- Compliance – RCO and the Park Service have been working closely on several large conversions such as the Department of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Natural Resources land exchange and the Highway 520 (floating bridge) expansion in King County. Other projects that will need collaboration in the near future include Fort Worden State Park and several smaller conversions in King County.
- Agency review – The Park Service will be auditing the RCO for the Land and Water Conservation Fund this year. We asked that they start after the finalization of the staff-intensive grant approval process (so after October 2010).

Similar meetings will continue on at least a yearly basis.

Project Administration

This table summarizes the outdoor recreation and habitat conservation projects currently being administered by staff.

- Active projects are under agreement.
- Staff is working with sponsors to place the "Board Funded" and "Director Approved" projects under agreement.

In addition, staff has several hundred funded projects that they monitor for long-term compliance.

Program	Active Projects	Board Funded Projects	Director Approved Projects	Total
Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA)	24	1	1	26
Boating Facilities Program (BFP)	25	0	0	25
Boating Infrastructure Grant Program (BIG)	2	0	1	3
Firearms and Archery Range Recreation (FARR)	13	2	0	15
Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)	7	0	1	8
Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	48	9	1	58
Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA)	96	0	0	96
Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)	194	10	6	210
Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF)	15	0	0	15
Total	424	22	10	456