

Land and Water Conservation Fund Program
2009 PRIORITY RATING SYSTEM
(EVALUATION CRITERIA)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federally funded grant program administered by the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to assist in preserving and developing public outdoor recreation lands and facilities for the benefit of all citizens. (LWCF Act of 1965, Public Law 88-578, 78 Stat 897)

Score	#	Title	Score and Multiplier	Maximum Points	Priority
Team	1	Consistency with SCORP	0-5 (x 3)	15	SCORP
Team	2	Need	0-5 (x 3)	15	SCORP
Team	3	Federal grant program priorities	0-5 (x 2)	10	LWCF
Team	4	Readiness	0-5	5	LWCF
Team	5	Cost Efficiencies	0-5	5	LWCF
Staff	6	Population Proximity	0-3	3	State law
Staff	7	Compliance	0-5	5	NPS Policy
TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE = 58					

KEY TO PRECEEDING TABLE

- Team = Criterion scored by the evaluation team
- Staff = Criterion scored by RCO staff
- LWCF = Criteria a priority for the Land and Water Conservation Fund
- SCORP = Criterion supported by the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Team Scored

Question 1. Consistency with the state comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (SCORP). To what extent does the project address one or more LWCF priorities identified in SCORP?

The most recent SCORP document is *Defining and Measuring Success: The Role of State Government in Outdoor Recreation* (RCO, 2008). SCORP identifies three priorities for LWCF grant-in-aid support:

1. Projects supporting individual active participation. “Active” means those forms of recreation that rely predominantly on human muscles and includes walking, sports of all kinds, bicycling, and other activities that help people achieve currently accepted recommendations for physical activity levels.
2. Projects that provide continued improvement of existing sites and facilities previously funded with Land and Water Conservation Fund grants. Note: *Evaluators should consider the actual proposed improvement, especially the extent to which the proposal will enhance or expand these sites or facilities, not the previously-funded project or project elements.*
3. The provision of active connections between communities and recreation sites and facilities. “Active connections” means shared use trails and paths, greenways, and other facilities and features that encourage walking, jogging, running, and bicycling for more than recreation. *The emphasis is on dedicated, grade-separated facilities.*

How well does the proposed project address any combination of these priorities?

Projects addressing more than one priority may not necessarily score higher than a project addressing one priority in an outstanding manner.

Evaluators award 0 to 5 points that are later multiplied by 3.

Question 2. Need. What is the need for the project?

Consider the goal of the project and how it relates to the service area:

- Inventory of existing sites and facilities
- Populations or activities that are unserved or underserved
- Amount of use of existing sites
- Potential use of proposed sites
- How the project meets identified need
- Whether the project is named by location or type as a priority in an adopted plan such as a community's comprehensive plan, a state agency capital improvement plan, or a park/open space plan.

Examples:

- A proposal to develop a new sport field to address an identified shortage could receive a high score. A proposal for a sports field without plans or relevant studies supporting the need would receive a lower score.
- A proposal for renovating the last intact Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) structure in a remote park site could receive a high score. A proposal to renovate a picnic shelter could also receive a high score if the use level is high.
- A proposal for building a community trail in a location or service area with few existing trails could receive a high score. A proposal to develop a trail in a location or service area where many other opportunities exist would receive a lower score. Note: *the applicant will define "community."*

Evaluators award 0-5 points that are later multiplied by 3.

Question 3. Federal grant program goals. How well does the proposed project meet Department of Interior and National Park Service goals for grant programs?

As a partner with the federal government, the State of Washington has a responsibility to respond to goals established by the Department of Interior (DOI).

The DOI has also developed annual goals for its agencies' programs. Examples include engaging children in the great outdoors and improving water use efficiency. Applicants and evaluators will be provided with the most recent set of federal goals and will be asked to determine the extent to which a proposed project addresses those goals. (*See the next page*).

For example: if the National Park Service has a current goal to encourage projects that meet the needs of underserved communities, expand the public recreation estate or strengthen the health and vitality of the American people, the applicant should be able to demonstrate how the proposal addresses this goal on the local, regional, or state level.

Projects providing opportunities that help meet one or more of these goals should receive higher scores than those projects that do not help meet any of the goals.

Projects will also be evaluated on *how well* they meet federal grant program goals.

- a) No federal goals are met.....(0 points)
- b) The project meets only one goal and the contribution to the goal is marginal or moderate.....(1-2 points)
- c) The project helps meet more than one goal and the contribution to the goals is moderate.....(3 points)
- d) The project helps meet one or more goals and the contribution is exemplary or substantial.....(4-5 points)

Evaluators award 0-5 points that are later multiplied by 2.

Department of the Interior 2008 Conservation Priorities *(still valid)*

At-Risk Species

Through this priority, the Department seeks to sustain biological communities by focusing on conserving the most imperiled components and improving the health of watersheds, landscapes, and marine resources. For listed species, bureaus can identify priority opportunities to enhance the condition of private lands consistent with restoration activities identified by the FWS recovery plans. The Department and its bureaus should also support State Comprehensive Wildlife Plans to benefit both Endangered Species Act-listed and candidate species.

Wild Birds

The Wild Birds initiative is intended to conserve birds and their habitats to assure healthy and sustainable populations. Three outcomes are envisioned: (1) Conserve priority bird habitat; (2) collect scientific data that support plans and guide management actions; and (3) educate citizens to understand the needs and stressors of birds.

Healthy Habitats

The goal of this priority is to enhance habitat on federally managed and adjoining lands. A prominent example of this priority being put into action is BLM's Healthy Lands initiative. Outcomes envisioned by this priority include improving the condition of wildlife habitat, with a special emphasis on sage brush and sage grouse habitat, promoting the recovery of species, and helping assure continued access to and multiple-use of public lands while improving the ecological landscape. To achieve these outcomes, bureaus should continue to work with their Federal and non-Federal partners to address issues such as decreasing native vegetation for fish and wildlife, the influx of non-native species, and degraded water quality.

Post-Fire Restoration

Consistent with the National Fire Plan this conservation priority focuses on restoration and post-fire recovery of fire-prone and fire-adapted ecosystems. Goals under this banner include reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfire, improving forest and rangeland health, and restoring and recovering lands post-fire.

Coastal Habitat

This conservation priority is intended to promote policies and programs that engender responsible use and stewardship of U.S. coastal resources. The President's Ocean Action Plan encompasses many of the concepts and goals of this priority. Strategies for success include effective management of coasts and their watersheds including coordination of bureau and agency activities; promotion of responsible and efficient use and conservation of ocean, coastal, and great lakes resources; and support for partnerships to develop and implement comprehensive management strategies.

Water

Successful natural resource conservation in the West depends heavily on reducing crises and conflict over water supply, and improving water supply and delivery. Efforts to improve water use efficiency through use of technology and alternative water use regimes will continue to be important. Water crises can be averted and mitigated by working with partners to settle water claims and manage or adjust water rights to achieve benefits to the Department's trust resources in a mutually acceptable manner.

Engage Today's Youth in the Great Outdoors

The goal of this priority is to enhance children's interaction with nature. Projects under this priority should contribute to reconnecting our youth with their nation's land and water. Better engaging our youth in the outdoors can create a new generation of stewards with a public service ethic; improve the mental and physical health of our nation; reduce the cost of health care; increase awareness of the important role that nature and science plays in our lives; strengthen America's workforce; and ensure the perpetuation of the resources entrusted to our care. Proposed grant and cooperative agreement projects can further this priority by adding a component that urges youth to engage with nature and the outdoors. For ideas that can be incorporated into a grant application or cooperative agreement proposal, applicants and other partners may visit the following website www.nps.gov/ChildrenInNature/BestPractices.

Question 4. Readiness. Is the project ready to proceed?

National Park Service rules encourage proposals that are ready for immediate implementation. That is, an applicant should be ready to start work as soon as a project agreement is signed.

- › **Start-Finish:** Are matching resources available? When will work on the project begin? When will work be completed and/or the facility open to use? How long will it take before the project is complete?

- › **Preliminary Work:** The degree to which the following are complete—permits, environmental clearances, historic or cultural resources, engineering, signed agreements, equipment, labor force, etc. Have any appeals been resolved? (Explain.)

- › **Acquisition Projects:** Has the landowner been contacted? Is the owner willing to sell? Does the applicant hold an option on the property? (Describe.) Are required appraisals and reviews completed? (Describe.) Will the land acquired be immediately available for use? (Explain.)
 - a. *Very large* barrier(s) exist that will likely delay the project a year or more.....(0 points)

 - b. *Substantial – significant* barrier(s) exist which will likely be removed in the next 12 months.....(1-2 points)

 - c. *Minimal – ordinary* barrier(s) exist which will likely be removed by the time a grant is approved.....(3-4 points)

 - d. *No* barriers; the project is ready to move forward immediately...(5 points)

Evaluators award 0-5 points. There is no multiplier.

Question 5. Cost Efficiencies. The extent that this project demonstrates efficiencies and/or reduces government costs through documented use of:

- › Donations
- › Innovative or sustainable design or construction resulting in long-term cost savings. Examples: Use of solar energy, integration of wetlands as “green infrastructure,” new materials or construction techniques with outstanding potential for long service life.
- › *Signed* cooperative agreements
- › *Signed* memoranda of understanding (such as no-cost easements/leases, or similar cost savings)
- › Volunteers.

- a. No evidence presented.....(0 points)
- b. The benefit of any such agreement in *marginal*.....(1-2 points)
- c. Cooperative measures will result in *moderate* efficiencies and/or savings.....(3 points)
- d. Cooperative measures will result in *substantial* efficiencies and/or savings.....(4-5 points)

Evaluators award 0-5 points. There is no multiplier.

Scored by RCO Staff

Question 6. Population Proximity. Is the project in a populated area? (Staff will score).

This question is scored by RCO staff based on a map provided by the applicant. To receive a score the map must show the project location and project boundary in relationship to a city's or town's urban growth area boundary.

- a) The project is located within the urban growth area boundary of a city or town with a population of 5,000 or more.

- Yes..... (1.5 points)
 - No..... (0 points)

- b) The project is located within a county with a population density of 250 or more people per square mile.

- Yes..... (1.5 points)
 - No..... (0 points)

The result from "a" is added to the result from "b". Projects in cities with more than 5,000 population *and* within high density counties receive points from both "a" and "b".

RCO staff awards a maximum of 3 points. There is no multiplier.

Scored by RCO Staff

Question 7. Compliance. Has the applicant demonstrated good grant stewardship? (Staff will score).

- a) Applicant has no outstanding compliance issues and has had no negative site inspection findings.....(5 points)
- b) Applicant has no outstanding compliance issues and has had only minor site inspection findings (e.g. missing signs).....(4 points)
- c) Applicant has no outstanding compliance issues but has outstanding site inspection findings that are not conversions.....(3 points)
- d) Applicant has outstanding confirmed conversion not of their making and is actively working with RCO and the National Park Service (NPS) to resolve.....(2 points)
- e) Applicant has outstanding confirmed conversion of their own making and is actively working with RCO and the NPS to resolve.....(1 point)
- f) An otherwise eligible applicant has one or more outstanding confirmed conversions that are not being worked on actively with the RCO or NPS to resolve.....(0 points)

To score this question, RCO staff will review the record of the applicant's compliance with the requirements of any previous RCO grant, made through any RCO-managed program. The review will be done with existing records available through PRISM and other sources, including but not limited to, compliance inspection reports and audits.

RCO staff awards a maximum of 5 points. There is no multiplier.