



STATE OF WASHINGTON

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**TO:** IAC Members and Designees

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**SUBJECT:** Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program  
State Lands Categories  
Notebook Item #4c

IAC staff continues to work with a small scoping team to draft policies for the two new categories added to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. State Lands Development and Renovation allows state agencies to develop and renovate facilities on properties already owned or managed by them. State Lands Restoration and Enhancement provides funds for habitat restoration activities on existing state lands.

**Restoration and Enhancement.** Initial policy work, for these two categories that are only open to the Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife, has focused on some of the key questions related to restoration and enhancement projects as outlined at the September meeting.

1. **Definition.** Two years ago the Board adopted the following definition of restoration as part of the policies approved for the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account.

“Restoration means to return damaged or altered tidelands, shore and/or uplands to a condition that could be reasonably expected to substantially improve ecological conditions. Restoration projects may include reintroduction of native vegetation, altering or removing structures, and other activities that can be reasonably expected to result in a site that is self-sustaining; that is, the site will not require continual intervention to function as a predominately natural ecosystem.”

This definition suggests that a restoration project will “substantially improve” the ecological conditions of a site. Initially, the scoping team considered using this definition for the new category. But after further review, the team will ask that this definition will be broadened to make it clear that restoration may simply return a site to its best condition before degradation of the habitat. This clarification will help make the distinction between projects that focus on “restoring” lands versus ones that involve both restoration *and* enhancement, as described in the following definition of enhancement.

“Enhancement means to augment habitat areas so that they are greater in value and functionality. Enhancement projects generally include planting native vegetation or adding natural amenities to an existing quality habitat area in a manner that is expected to augment or substantially improve ecological conditions.”

Final policy materials will include revised definitions for both restoration and enhancement.

2. **Evaluation Process.** Although there is no final recommendation at this time on whether we should use an in-person or written evaluation process, it is clear that project evaluations should incorporate a points-based system. If possible the evaluation process should be simplified and possibly follow the format currently used for the federal Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act). This is a system that assigns points in a range by each category of criteria as is currently used for the habitat categories of the WWRP.

The evaluation process for the federal program is a written process and does not require in-person presentations. Applicants are expected to submit a Project Statement that answers key questions and establish performance measures for each proposal. The project statement addresses elements such as:

- a. **Need:** Why is the project being undertaken?
- b. **Objective:** What is to be accomplished during the period of the project pursuant to the stated need? (Specify fully what is to be accomplished within the time, money, and staffing allocated and specify end point.)
- c. **Expected Results and Benefits:** How will the project impact fish and wildlife resources or benefit the public? Try to provide quantifiable or verifiable resource benefits.
- d. **Approach:** How will the objective be attained? Include specific procedures, schedules, key cooperators and respective roles.
- e. **Location:** Where will the work be done? Describe habitat type(s) to be affected, and relevant ecosystem/watershed characterization.

Using adopted criteria; members of the evaluation team individually assess and score each proposal using the point system. After the results are tabulated, the team meets to assess the results and possibly consider other subjective criteria that might impact the success of a proposal such as readiness to proceed, how critical is it that the proposal be funded now, and are there species related ecological /biological issues to consider that would impact ranking. The federal program incorporates a process for possible re-ranking the proposal if there is a compelling and defensible argument for doing so, however, that part of the process may appear to be inconsistent with IAC's policy of fair and equitable processes conducted in open public meetings.

3. **Evaluation Team.** The evaluation team should include at least five members. There would be at least one representative from the Department of Fish and Wildlife, a representative from the Department of Natural Resources, and a citizen-at-large. The make-up of the remaining membership could include another citizen representative and one or two other governmental entities (including Native American Tribes). Depending on availability; preference would be given to citizen representatives from organizations such as land trusts and wildlife and recreation groups with expertise in applicable disciplines such as: natural resource or fish and wildlife management.
4. **Evaluation Criteria.** RCW 79A.15.060(6) recommends criteria that the Board should consider when determining priorities for projects funded in the Habitat Conservation Account. While the evaluation questions have not been finalized key criteria considered important for assessing these restoration/enhancement projects include:
  - a. **Ecological /Biological Characteristics.** Why is the site worthy of long term conservation efforts? How unique is the site in terms of habitat quality, connectivity, diversity, and rarity? How is the site important in providing critical habitat or biological function for wildlife species or communities? How does this site compare to others of the same type?
  - b. **Need:** What is the need for stewardship activities, whether restoration or enhancement? Describe the quality and function of the habitat and the demonstrated need to restore or enhance it.
  - c. **Species.** What are the species of wildlife that will benefit from the improvements proposed for this site?
  - d. **Priority:** Is this project part of a watershed plan or habitat conservation plan, or a coordinated region wide prioritization effort? This question could also be designed as an applicant-scored criterion that focuses on each agencies internal priorities.
  - e. **Long-Term Viability:** Will the project result in restoring or enhancing land that function in a manner that is sustainable and integrates appropriately with

bordering communities or habitats? What are the long-term stewardship plans and the anticipated outcome?

It is expected that the final design the evaluation criteria /instrument will aid in development of specific performance measures for each project. Plans are to distribute draft criteria in November for public review and comment.

### **Recreation Development and Renovation**

The State Lands Development and Renovation category allows DNR and WDFW to develop and renovate facilities on properties already owned or managed by the applicant. Since all lands managed by the Department of Fish and Wildlife are open for public use, it is believed that eligible projects in this category should include development of public access facilities on habitat lands.

1. **Evaluation Process.** These projects either through the project review or evaluation sessions, would need to prepare presentation materials or plans that would clearly show the layout and proposed design elements to allow for review for eligibility, barrier-free accessibility, and long-term use. The scoping team is looking at options for streamlining and may recommend using a written evaluation process.
2. **Evaluation Team.** While the details are still in the development stage the make-up of the evaluation team would be like that described for restoration and enhancement projects with emphasis on expertise in management of recreation and habitat lands, trails, and water access sites.
3. **Evaluation Criteria.** Since much of the development on state lands involves trails and water access facilities and there is no statutory directive on how to assess these projects, criteria currently under consideration is drawn from other evaluation instruments used for similar developments. These include:
  - a. **Need.** Considering the availability of existing public access sites within the service area, what is the need for additional sites or facilities?
  - b. **Suitability and Design.** Is the site well suited for the intended recreational uses? Does the project demonstrate good design criteria? Does it make the best use of the site? Will environmental or other important values be protected by the proposed development?
  - c. **Diversity and Compatibility.** To what extent does this project provide diversity of recreational activities? What level of public access is provided that will ensure resource values are sustained when developing access facilities on habitat lands?
  - d. **Existing and Potential Public Use.** Does this project provide facilities for public access, education, and/or enjoyment? Describe the use the site currently receives and what are the expected impacts to use after the proposed improvements are completed.

- e. **Community Support.** Has the public (statewide, community, and/or user groups) been provided with adequate opportunities to become informed about this project? Is community support for the project apparent? To what degree do members of the public benefit from or support the project? Describe the support/partnerships you have from the community, interest groups, volunteers, public agencies, etc. How have you involved these groups in project development? Explain any known opposition to the project and efforts to address concerns.
- f. **Plan Priorities.** Is this project a priority in a state or regional comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (*An Assessment of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State: 2002-2006, Boating Facilities Plan*)?

### **Next Steps**

IAC staff, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, along with citizen representatives will finish drafting program policies and evaluation criteria. Materials will be distributed for public review and comment in anticipation of policies submitted to the Board for adoption in February.

**Table 1**

***Revised Timeline for Development of Policies for the State Lands Categories***

<b>November</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>IAC meeting:</b> progress report</li> <li>• Complete draft of program policies and evaluation criteria</li> <li>• Solicit public comment on the draft policies</li> </ul>
<b>December</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• File draft rule language (CR102)</li> <li>• Solicit public comments on draft policies and rule(s)</li> </ul>
<b>2006 January</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop final recommendations for IAC</li> </ul>
<b>February</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>IAC meeting:</b> review public comments; conduct public hearing; adopt policy manual, rule(s)</li> <li>• Distribute adopted policies and application materials</li> <li>• Solicit grant proposals</li> </ul>
<b>May</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications due</li> </ul>
<b>June - August</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate applications, develop prioritized list</li> </ul>
<b>September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>IAC meeting:</b> presentation of proposed projects; public testimony; approve prioritized lists for possible submission to Governor</li> </ul>
<b>October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit prioritized lists to Governor by November 1</li> </ul>