Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation

360/902-3000
360/902-3026 (fax)
email: info@iac.wa.gov

STATE OF WASHINGTON

Salmon Recovery Funding Board

360/902-2636
360/902-3026 (fax)
email: salmon@iac.wa.gov

OFFICE OF THE INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE
1111 Washington Street SE
PO Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

November 2, 2006

TOPIC #4: URBAN WILDLIFE HABITAT PROGRAM – STATUS REPORT

Prepared By: Neil Aaland, Assistant Director **Approved by the Director:** [illegible]

Presented By: Neil Aaland, Assistant Director

Proposed Action:
Briefing and Board authorization to form an advisory committee

Summary:
The IAC reviewed trends in the Urban Wildlife Habitat (UWH) category of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program after changes were made to the evaluation criteria in 1999. IAC expressed strong concern about these trends and asked staff to develop a proposal that addresses them.

Staff Recommendation:
Staff is recommending that an advisory committee be formed to develop a final proposal that addresses these concerns.

Background:
In 1999, the IAC changed the evaluation criteria for the UWH category, which has resulted in three major trends:

1. The average grant amount has increased, almost doubling since 1991 (from a range of $450,000 to $900,000 between 1989-99 to a range of $950,000 to $1,250,000 between 1999-2007)
2. Local governments are not as successful in receiving grants. Between 1991 and 1999, local governments received approximately 75% of the available funding. Between 2000-2006, local governments have received approximately 27%.
3. Grants were awarded for properties significantly farther away from the more densely developed urban areas.

In June 2006, staff presented to the IAC a thorough analysis of the changes and trends in the UWH category. IAC discussed this analysis and determined that changes were needed to reverse these trends. In September 2006, IAC reviewed an initial staff proposal and provided additional direction, specifying that the proposed changes must

be made in time for the 2008 grant round. The requested date for a final proposal from staff is June 2007.

Analysis:
Staff believes assistance from an advisory committee is needed to help develop options for consideration, given the potential impacts on grant recipients. The advisory committee would include representatives from affected stakeholders, including local government and state agencies and one IAC citizen member. Staff's initial thinking is that the potential options for advisory committee consideration include:

1. Revise the evaluation criteria and scoring system.
2. Set a cap (upper limit on the amount of a grant) to ensure funding of more requests.
3. Revise the geographic eligibility criteria.
4. Reserve a percentage of the category funding for state or local government and/or desired project types.
5. Have a second year grant round only for state or local government and/or desired project types.

The advisory committee would be informed that the Board believes the existing statutory requirements governing the category are still valid and is not looking for recommendations to amend the statute. Those requirements for the Urban Wildlife Habitat category are shown in Attachment A.

Other options may emerge from the advisory committee process.

Next Steps:
1. Form advisory committee (November)
2. Hold advisory committee meetings (December/January)
3. Interim briefing of IAC (February 8/9, 2007)
4. Outreach on proposed changes
    a. Circulate drafts via e-mail using PRISM interest lists
    b. Announce at application workshops (February)
    c. Post on IAC Web site
5. Final staff proposal to IAC (June 7/8, 2007)

Attachment A
Statutory Requirements for Habitat Conservation Account – Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
RCW 79A.15.060

"(6) In determining acquisition priorities with respect to the habitat conservation account, the committee shall consider, at a minimum, the following criteria:

(a) For critical habitat and natural areas proposals:

(i) Community support;

(ii) Immediacy of threat to the site;

(iii) Uniqueness of the site;

(iv) Diversity of species using the site;

(v) Quality of the habitat;

(vi) Long-term viability of the site;

(vii) Presence of endangered, threatened, or sensitive species;

(viii) Enhancement of existing public property;

(ix) Consistency with a local land use plan, or a regional or statewide recreational or resource plan; and

(x) Educational and scientific value of the site.

(b) For urban wildlife habitat proposals, in addition to the criteria of (a) of this subsection:

(i) Population of, and distance from, the nearest urban area;

(ii) Proximity to other wildlife habitat;

(iii) Potential for public use; and

(iv) Potential for use by special needs populations." [italics added]