

December 28, 2007

Topic #10: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Phased Projects

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Approved by the Director:

Proposed Action: Briefing

Summary

In November 2007, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) adopted a policy to give preference to Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) projects that are later phases of a previously funded project. This preference will be given only when the project has scored equally with one or more non-phased projects. The board was undecided about whether phased projects should also receive preference in the evaluation process. A subcommittee of the Board was formed to discuss the topic in more detail and report back at the board's January 2008 meeting.

Subcommittee Recommendation

The subcommittee recommends a more thorough exploration of the topic, with a report back to the RCFB in November 2008. Other than the action taken at the November 2007 RCFB meeting, no changes for the 2008 grant cycle are proposed.

Background

Current policy recommends that agencies planning complex or high cost projects consider phasing or staging the project. Staged/phased projects are subject to the following requirements:

- Approval of any single stage is limited to that stage, no approval or endorsement is given or implied toward future stages.
- Each stage must stand on its merits as a viable project.¹
- Each stage must be submitted as a separate application.
- Progress and sponsor performance on other grants may be considered by RCFB when making decisions on current project proposals.

Subcommittee Discussion and Proposal

¹ Outdoor recreation projects must also provide a "complete recreation experience."

A subcommittee consisting of RCFB members Jeff Parsons and Dave Brittell met with the RCO Director and staff to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of phasing and to better understand advantages and disadvantages associated with instituting changes to current policy.

Staff provided examples of how the current policy has worked well in most instances, as evidenced by a history of successfully phased projects in both the Outdoor Recreation and Habitat Conservation Accounts of WWRP. Examples of unsuccessful phases were also discussed. Subcommittee members identified key project types such as trails and large acquisitions from a single landowner, where some assurance of continued funding could be especially critical to the applicant.

Phased projects represent not just present but also future level of need and demand for grant funds. Topics such as leveraging other fund sources, making strategic investments, and the RCO serving as a “grants clearinghouse” were also discussed. The subcommittee recommends a more thorough exploration of the topic over the next several months with a report back to the RCFB in November 2008.

Next Steps

RCO staff proposes using the current cycle of WWRP applications to compile data regarding percentage of applications by category that represent single phase projects, initial phases of staged proposals, and those that represent ongoing phases of previously funded projects. For later phases of a project, staff will assess sponsor performance on previous phases and whether any scope changes have occurred or are being proposed.

Staff will also interview stakeholders who had been involved in past projects that were not successful in subsequent phases to learn from their perspective.

Staff will report back to the Board in November 2008 with a presentation on the data gleaned from the 2008 application cycle and further exploration of other issues embedded in the preference for phasing topic, such as:

- Past history of phasing
- Advantages and disadvantages of phasing in general
- Advantages and disadvantages of giving preference to later phases of previously funded projects