

SUBJECT: Request Approval of Allocation Plan for Grant Subprograms of Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program

FOR: AUGUST, 2011 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY / TITLE: Mary Rose Teves, Bureau Director, Community Financial Assistance

SUMMARY:

Nonprofit conservation organizations (NCOs) apply to four subprograms of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program: Natural Areas, Habitat Areas, Streambank Protection and State Trails.

For the last 10 years, the Department has awarded grants based on project eligibility as defined in statutes and rule. For the upcoming grant cycle and into the future, the DNR will use criteria to score projects and determine project rank by subprogram. The new scoring and ranking system requires the DNR to define an allocation of funds to each grant subprogram. DNR staff recommend an allocation of funds that mirror grant awards over the last 10 years:

- Natural Area Grants -- 40%
- Habitat Area Grants -- 40%
- Streambank Protection Grants -- 10%
- Grants for State Trails -- 10%

Several years ago, the NRB approved a similar allocation plan for Stewardship grants to local governments. Those allocations have worked well for several years unchanged. DNR staff recommend board affirmation of the existing allocation for local government subprograms.

- Aquisition and Development of Local Parks -- 50%
- Urban Rivers Grants -- 20%
- Urban Green Space Grants - 20%
- Aquisition of Development Rights -- 10%

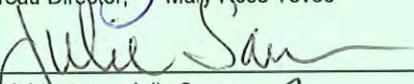
RECOMMENDATION: Approve proposed allocation plan for funding Stewardship grant subprograms.

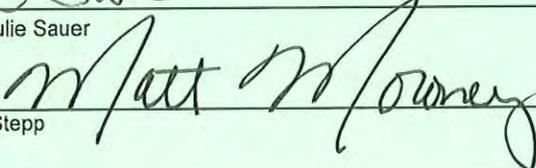
LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

- | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|-----|-------------------------------------|----------|
| No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Fiscal Estimate Required | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Attached |
| No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Attached |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> | Background Memo | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Attached |

APPROVED:


 Bureau Director, Mary Rose Teves


 Administrator, Julie Sauer


 Secretary, Cathy Stepp

06-21-2011
 Date

6/27/11
 Date

6/28/11
 Date

cc: NRB Liaison
DNR Rules Coordinator

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 13, 2011
TO: Natural Resources Board
FROM: Secretary Cathy Stepp

SUBJECT: Approval of Allocation Plan for Stewardship Grants

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program pays for land acquisition and recreational development projects. Some projects are undertaken directly by the Department. Other projects are undertaken by local governments or non-profit conservation organizations (NCOs) with the help of 50% grants provided by the Department. The paragraphs below concern the grant portion of the Stewardship Program.

By statutes, NCOs may apply for land acquisition grants in any of the following four Stewardship subprograms:

- Natural Areas
- Streambank Protection
- Habitat Areas
- State Trails

By statutes, local governments may apply for land acquisition or development grants in any of the following four Stewardship subprograms:

- Acquisition and Development of Local Parks
- Urban Rivers
- Acquisition of Development Rights
- Urban Green Spaces

Projects in the same subprogram will compete against each other for grant funding. It is reasonable and desirable for the Department to establish an allocation plan that partitions the total available funding each fiscal year, by subprogram, for both NCO and local government grant subprograms. If, in the future, the Department encounters compelling reason to alter this allocation plan, any proposed adjustment will be brought to the Board.

Allocation for NCO Grants

The 2011-2013 Biennial Budget appropriates \$12 million annually to NCO grant subprograms. Based on the frequency of grant awards between from 2000-2010, the Department proposes the following allocation plan for NCO subprograms:

Grants for Natural Areas	40% = \$4.8 million
Grants for Habitat Areas	40% = \$4.8 million
Grants for Streambank Protection	10% = \$1.2 million
Grants for State Trails	<u>10% = \$1.2 million</u>
TOTAL:	100% = \$12.0 million

You will find a detailed description of how the allocation will be managed and awarded in future grant cycles in the attached program description.

Allocation for Local Government Grants

The 2011-2013 Biennial Budget authorizes \$8 million annually for local government subprograms. For several years, the Department has implemented the following allocation plan for local government subprograms without incident or complaint:

Grants for Acquisition and Development of Local Parks	50% = \$4.0 million
Grants for Urban Rivers	20% = \$1.6 million
Grants for Urban Green Space	20% = \$1.6 million
Grants for Acquisition of Development Rights	10% = \$0.8 million

You will find a detailed description of how the allocation will be managed and awarded in future grant cycles in the attached program description.

Nonprofit Conservation Organization Stewardship Grant Evaluation

Grants staff will use the following scoring and ranking process when evaluating Stewardship grant applications submitted by nonprofit conservation organizations (NCO). Authority to create scoring criteria appears in s. NR 51.04, Wis. Adm. Code, and reads as follows:

NR 51.04 Application procedures and eligibility for grant assistance.

(1) APPLICATION PROCEDURES. (a) Applications for stewardship grant assistance shall be submitted to the appropriate region office on forms provided by the department. The department may request more detailed information and may withhold evaluation of the application until the additional information requested has been received.

Note: Copies of application forms and instructions are available from the DNR, Bureau of Community Assistance, Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707.

(b) The department may approve applications as they come in, year-round to the extent that funds are available or the department may establish application deadlines for individual components of the stewardship programs in order to rate and rank competing applications.

Application Submittal and Review Deadlines	All applications postmarked by February 1 will be evaluated against established subprogram criteria for possible award of Stewardship grant funds in the fiscal year that begins the following July 1 st .
Scoring	Projects will be scored by regional Community Services Specialists in consultation with appropriate DNR resource specialists using established subprogram criteria. Project scores will be composed of both points applicable to all subprograms and points earned in the relevant subprogram.
Ranking	Statewide consistency in scoring will be ensured at a statewide project selection meeting. Projects will be ranked based on composite score, in descending order, by subprogram.
Competition by Subprogram	Projects will compete against all other projects in the same subprogram.
Subprogram Allocations	Funds available to each subprogram will be allocated by a decision of the Natural Resources Board.
One Project in Multiple Subprograms	Projects meeting the requirements of more than one Stewardship grant subprogram will be evaluated in both subprograms to determine which subprogram is the best fit for the project and to maximize award of high-scoring projects in all subprograms.
Preliminary Award Decisions	Grant funds will be allocated, by subprogram, beginning with the highest-scoring project, in rank order, until all subprogram funds are exhausted. If less than 50% cost-sharing is available to award because that is all that remains in the subprogram, those remaining funds will be offered to the next highest-ranked applicant and the applicant will decide whether to accept or refuse the lesser amount.
Notice to Applicants	Successful applicants will receive "preliminary approval" notices, in writing, approximately 12 weeks after the application submission deadline. Unsuccessful applicants will receive status letters approximately 2 weeks after successful applicants are notified in the event successful applicants decline an offer of financial assistance and funds become available to award to applicants farther down on the ranked list of projects.

Unsuccessful Applicants	Sponsors of applications not funded will have the option to: (a) Request that their application to be considered as-is during the next grant cycle, or (b) Reapply at a later date.
Funds Not Awarded	If all funds allocated to a particular subprogram are not awarded during an evaluation process for whatever reason, the remaining balance in that subprogram loses its subprogram identity distinction and becomes available for award to other unfunded projects, regardless of subprogram, having the highest percentage of the maximum possible score. <i>(Note: Applications in subprograms NA, HA and Stream Bank have higher priority than Trails per s. 23.0917(3)(c). Wis. Stats.)</i>
Funds Awarded but Not Spent	If a grant award is withdrawn or terminated by the DNR or refused by the applicant, funds associated with that application will be offered to the next highest ranked project in the same subprogram. If there is not such an application, those unused funds will lose their subprogram identity and become available for award to unfunded projects, regardless of subprogram, having the highest percentage of the maximum possible score. <i>(Note: Applications in subprograms NA, HA and Stream Bank have higher priority than Trails per s. 23.0917(3)(c). Wis. Stats.)</i>
Adjustments to Fund Partitioning	There may be times when an application of extraordinary importance is submitted, funds within the subprogram are insufficient to make a 50% cost-sharing award to that project, and the project cannot be completed with less than 50% assistance from the Stewardship Program. In such cases, the Department may choose to adjust the procedure above and alter the percent of available funds attributed to each subprogram with the goal of making sufficient funds available to award to the extraordinary application. In such a circumstance, the Department will seek concurrence from the Stewardship Advisory Council and approval of the Natural Resources Board before deviating from the approved allocation plan.
Borrowing Ahead	There may be times when several applications of extraordinary importance are submitted but funds within one or more subprograms are insufficient to make a 50% cost-sharing award to those projects. In such cases, the Department may choose to commit funds from the coming fiscal year, following the procedures outlined in s. 23.0917(5), Wis. Stats., with the goal of having sufficient funds available to award to the extraordinary applications. In such a circumstance, the Department will seek concurrence from the Stewardship Advisory Council and approval of the Natural Resources Board before borrowing ahead.