



STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE
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November 2, 2006

**TOPIC #10: NATIONAL RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM (NRTP) FUNDING
CYCLE ADJUSTMENT**

Prepared & Presented By:
Greg Lovelady, Manager, Applied Planning Section

Approved by the Director: 

Proposed Action: Decision

Summary:

Annually, IAC's adoption of the NRTP project funding list occurs so late in the federal fiscal year that loss of funding is a regular risk. To eliminate this timing issue, staff recommends for one year that IAC "double-up" its funding process. That is, in 2007 IAC would accept (and encourage applicants to submit) applications for both 2007 and 2008. This would put us approximately 12 months ahead of the deadline instead of a few weeks or, as occurred this year, a few days.

Staff Recommendation:

To virtually eliminate the risk of losing an annual apportionment of NRTP funds (approximately \$1.4 million) due to an unforeseen timing event, IAC staff recommends approval of a one time funding cycle adjustment. That is, in May 2007 applicants will be encouraged to submit, and IAC will accept, applications for both the 2007 and 2008 grants cycle. In 2008, NRTP applications would be accepted as usual.

Staff has provided Resolution #2006-45 for Board consideration.

Background:

The federal fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30. During this period, IAC must meet all program rules before receiving permission from the federal administrator, the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA), to obligate grants for NRTP projects. Completion of these obligations has always been scheduled very late in the federal fiscal year. Each September, when IAC approves the listing of NRTP projects for funding, IAC staff sometimes has only a few days to assemble evidence of this action¹ for review by FHWA, before our rights to the funds lapse. That is, in any year, if for some reason the materials were not to reach FHWA by October 1, all NRTP grant funds for the year would be lost.

¹ And other required materials such as the project listing, IAC's advisory committee meeting notes, Federal-Aid Project Agreement Form, etc.



Analysis:

To remedy this situation, and for one time only, staff proposes that we ask applicants to submit two year's worth of NRTP projects by the next grants deadline in May 2007. From that point onward IAC would return to receiving applications one year at a time. The only difference is that we would be approximately one year ahead of the federal deadline.

Another advantage of this proposal is the flexibility it will allow to move applications into a program or category where it will have a greater chance for funding. Currently, applicants and IAC staff have only a few weeks in which to consider each NRTP project in light of the program's many variables. One of these variables is the determination of whether a project stands a better chance for funding if moved to the Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Program.

NOVA is a "sister" program to NRTP in that both are based on gasoline fuel taxes and often fund identical project types. Because the number of projects submitted to these programs varies each year, it is sometimes advantageous to move an application from one program to the other.² This would occur before the program's technical completion deadline (prior to evaluations) and with the approval of the applicant. However, it is normally very difficult to implement such shifts because: (1) funding of NRTP projects occurs almost two months³ before NOVA projects and (2) NRTP applicants are often unavailable to engage in program-category shift discussions because they are out of the office serving on forest fire fighting crews.

This proposal to advance NRTP funding by almost 12 months would make it possible to move NRTP funding to IAC's November funding meeting, thus allowing more time to consider program-category shifts.

Disadvantages to the proposal include the added burden on applicants of preparing funding requests for two grants cycles instead of one. It is possible that some might not be able to respond, requiring a carryover of dollars to the next grants cycle (but, the dollars would be secure, in no danger of loss), or implementation of a supplemental grants cycle later in the year. Further, there is little time for members of the NRTP Advisory Committee or applicants to provide us with their thoughts on this proposal. (Staff plans to announce this proposal by the end of October, so some feedback may be available by the November 16-17, 2006 board meeting.)

Next Steps:

After approval by the IAC Board, staff will work with interested parties to implement this funding cycle adjustment including: publicizing the change, determination of how applicants should address grant submission (that is, would it be best for them to submit

² Moving a project from NRTP to NOVA (or vice versa) is usually most beneficial when the original program contains far more applications than available dollars *and* the target program contains too few applications for available dollars.

³ NRTP projects are now funded each September, NOVA projects are funded each November.

a single large request covering the two fiscal years or should they submit two grant applications), etc.

Attachments:

- Attachment – Draft adoption resolution

RESOLUTION #2006-45

**National Recreational Trails Program:
Accepting-Encouraging 2007 and 2008 Applications in 2007**

WHEREAS, the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) has received National Recreational Trails Program (NRTP) grant funds each year since 1994, which has proved to be a great benefit to those who use trails in Washington State, and

WHEREAS, the adoption by IAC of the funding list for projects in this grant program occurs so late in the federal fiscal year that loss of these funding is a regular risk, and

WHEREAS, this "timing issue" risk can be virtually eliminated by accepting applications for two grant cycles in May 2007, and then returning to the normal one year cycle in 2008,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that IAC will hereby accept and encourage NRTP grant applications for funds for 2007 and 2008, both in the year 2007.

Resolution Moved By: _____

Resolution Seconded By: _____

Adopted/Defeated/Deferred (underline one)

Date: November 16, 2006