



STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE

1111 Washington Street SE  
PO Box 40917  
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

May 17, 2007

**TOPIC 4.e.2: FPP Assistance Grants to Counties**

**Prepared & Presented By:** Jim Fox

**Approved by the Director:** *LED*

---

**Proposed Action:** Adopt Resolution 2007-10

**Summary:**

With a \$100 M appropriation for WWRP, there is adequate funding for all of the projects in the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) category, with about \$4.3M remaining uncommitted. In anticipation of having additional funds available, IAC asked the legislature for the authority to conduct a 2007 grant cycle and to provide one-time grants of up to \$25,000 each to counties requesting assistance in developing farmland preservation strategies for the purpose of seeking future grants from the FPP. Our hope is that these assistance grants would be an incentive for counties without a farmland preservation strategy to begin working with the community to develop one.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that IAC offer one-time FPP technical assistance grants of up to \$25,000 to counties to begin developing farmland preservation strategies. Staff further recommends that IAC enter into an agreement with the Washington State Conservation Commission to identify counties having the greatest need and desire for assistance and advise the IAC on awarding grants at the November 1-2, 2007, IAC meeting.

**Background:**

Although there was considerable interest in the new FPP during the first grant cycle in 2006, IAC staff was told that a number of counties were not ready to submit applications for a number of reasons:

- Lack of community awareness and understanding of the program
- The need to decide if acquisition of development rights through purchase of agricultural conservation easements is the approach the county would like to pursue



- Lack of a county strategy for preserving farmland, including identification of priority farmland
- Lack of familiarity with developing conservation easements
- Lack of resources to work with landowners, potential partners such as conservation districts and land trusts, and to write a grant

In response, IAC requested legislative approval to offer technical assistance grants to counties for the purpose of beginning the development of farmland preservation strategies. The approval to use FPP funds for this purpose was provided in the 2007-09 Capital Budget (see Attachment I).

On April 27, 2007, IAC staff convened the standing FPP Advisory Committee to discuss and make recommendations on this issue, as well as on the draft model conservation easement and proposed revisions to the FPP policy manual. The committee was unanimous in agreeing on the need for technical assistance grants and recommended that, rather than setting aside a specific amount of funding for the grants, IAC work with the Washington State Conservation Commission to identify counties that are ready for assistance and have the greatest interest and need.

The Conservation Commission will house the new Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP) established by SSB5108, signed by the Governor on May 8, 2007. One of the first tasks of OFP staff will be to travel to counties around Washington to meet with county officials and local agricultural organizations to assess the interest, need, and readiness to engage in developing a county farmland preservation program. The Conservation Commission Director suggests that this be the basis for making recommendations to the IAC on which counties should receive technical assistance grants.

#### **Analysis:**

County farmland preservation strategies will be crucial in directing the investment of FPP funds to the highest priority farmland. Assistance grants to counties will provide resources for counties to work with landowners and agricultural organizations to begin to develop goals for farmland preservation, identify the highest priority areas to preserve, and to inform the agricultural community about the availability of FPP funding. Although IAC could award these assistance grants based on a peer-reviewed competition, the approach proposed by the Conservation Commission will be more informed and collaborative.

At this time there is no way to assess the likely demand for these assistance grants or for grants in the second-year FPP grant cycle. Thus there is no basis for setting aside a portion of the available \$4.3 M for assistance grants. However, with the requests for the "traditional" FPP grants and assistance grants in front of the Board at the November 1-2, 2007, meeting, the Board can weigh the two lists when deciding on fund allocation.

**Next Steps:**

- Develop an MOU with the Washington State Conservation Commission
- Call for applications for technical assistance grants
- Coordinate with Conservation Commission staff on evaluating applicants interest, need, and readiness
- Brief IAC at the September 13-14, 2007, IAC (RCFB) meeting
- Make the final funding recommendation at the November 1-2, 2007, IAC (RCFB) meeting

**Attachments:**

- ESHB1092, Sec. 3146
- Resolution 2007-10

**Budget Provisos Pertaining to the WWRP Farmland Preservation Program  
From the 2007-09 Capital Budget (ESHB1092)**

**NEW SECTION. Sec. 3146. FOR THE INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE FOR  
OUTDOOR RECREATION**

Washington Wildlife Recreation Grants (08-4-011)

The appropriations in this section are subject to the following conditions and limitations:

(1) The appropriations are provided solely for the approved list of projects in LEAP capital document No. 2007-3 as developed on March 17, 27 2007.

(2) If additional funds are available after funding the farmlands preservation account projects approved in subsection (1) of this section, the committee may:

a) Provide one-time grants of up to \$25,000 each to counties requesting assistance in developing farmlands preservation strategies for the purpose of seeking grants from the farmlands preservation account in future grant cycles.

(b) Conduct a second grant cycle in the 2007-2009 biennium for farmlands preservation projects. A ranked list of farmlands preservation projects may be submitted to the governor by November 1, 2007, for approval in the 2008 supplemental capital budget. The governor may remove projects from the list recommended by the committee and shall submit this amended list in the supplemental capital budget request to the legislature.

(3) ...

**INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION  
RESOLUTION #2007-10**

**Farmland Preservation Program  
Technical Assistance Grants to Counties**

**WHEREAS**, there are a number of counties that are interested in pursuing the preservation of their farmland but do not have the resources to begin development of a farmland preservation program and strategy; and

**WHEREAS**, county farmland preservation strategies will help guide the investment of Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) funds in the highest priority farmland in the state; and

**WHEREAS**, the FPP Advisory Committee and other interested individuals strongly recommend that IAC offer grants to counties to begin the development of farmland preservation programs and strategies; and

**WHEREAS**, the Office of Farmland Preservation, to be established within the Conservation Commission, is charged with providing technical assistance relating to farmland preservation; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2007-09 Capital Budget (C520 L07, Sec. 3146) authorizes IAC to "provide one-time grants of up to \$25,000 each to counties requesting assistance in developing farmlands preservation strategies for the purpose of seeking grants from the farmlands preservation account in future grant cycles" using FPP funds;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the IAC offer one-time grants of up to \$25,000 to counties requesting assistance in developing farmlands preservation strategies; and,

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that IAC enter into an agreement with the Washington State Conservation Commission Office of Farmland Preservation to evaluate county interest, need, and readiness for assistance and make recommendations to the IAC for funding at the November 1-2, 2007 meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_ Moved \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Seconded \_\_\_\_\_

MOTION CARRIED / FAILED