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STATE OF WASHINGTON

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

October 12, 2007

Topic #9: WWRP Population Points – Policy Issue

Prepared and Presented By: Myra Barker

Approved by the Director: 

Proposed Action: Decision

Summary

On August 27, Recreation and Conservation Office staff requested comment from interested parties on whether or not to modify the *Population Proximity* evaluation question for projects submitted in the Outdoor Recreation Account of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. This memorandum summarizes the proposed options and comments, and outlines staff's recommendation for modifications to existing program policies.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends retaining and simplifying the population proximity question. In addition, staff recommends reducing the maximum points given. The revised question and points awarded would be:

NEW Population Proximity

- a. The project is located within the urban growth area boundary of a city or town with a population of 5,000 or more. Yes: 1.5 points. No: 0 points.

AND

- b. The project is located within a county with a population density of 250 or more people per square mile. Yes: 1.5 points. No: 0 points.

Total possible: 3 points.

This new question would be used for the Local Parks, State Parks, Trails and Water Access categories.



Analysis

RCW 79A.25.250³ directs RCFB to place a priority on parks located in or near urban areas. Using the statutory definition for urban areas (population 5,000) as a basis for the population question, subsequent levels of population and points awarded were developed.

The competitive nature of a grant cycle can result in a project being funded based on score differences in tenths of a point. Given that, it was not surprising that several comments cited the disadvantage the population points question presents to projects located outside of urban areas. The population question relates solely to location and does not account for a project's described service area, use by non-permanent residents (those living outside the urban growth boundary, tourists, second home residents, etc.) or to the regional significance, when applicable.

There are 112 cities or towns that have populations exceeding the threshold (5,000 or greater) for receiving points. Approximately 169 cities or towns are below this threshold.

Eight counties⁴ have population densities meeting the threshold for receiving points. Those are Clark, Island, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, and Thurston. Subsequently, thirty-one counties do not meet the minimum population density to receive points.

Interested parties commented on the following options.

- ➔ **Option 1:** Retain the current question for all Outdoor Recreation Account categories but reduce the maximum number of points in some or all of the categories.

Pros	Cons
Retains the statutory direction to place a priority on projects located near urban areas but reduces the relative emphasis.	Does not simplify the evaluation question.
The need for a project based on its service area is captured in other evaluation criteria. Population proximity points are not necessary to demonstrate need.	If population proximity points are greatly reduced, may not meet the legislative intention to locate projects in or near urban areas.
Reducing the points lessens the bias	

³ RCW 79A.25.250. This statute defines urban areas as any incorporated city with a population of 5,000 persons or greater or any county with a population density of 250 persons per square mile or greater.

⁴ Clark: 661.88, Island: 369.81, King: 874.67, Kitsap: 622.90, Pierce: 471.94, Snohomish: 327.12, Spokane: 255.78, and Thurston: 327.37.

against less populated areas.	
Places greater weight on the remaining evaluation criteria that focus on the project's described need.	
Is more consistent with other RCFB grant programs' point value for a project's location to population.	

- ➔ **Option 2:** Simplify the question and reduce the maximum points awarded in some or all the categories. The new question:

"Is the project located within the urban growth area boundary of a city/town with a population of 5,000 or more or within a county with a population density of 250 or more people per square mile?" Yes/No.

Pros	Cons
Same as those under Option 1.	If population proximity points are greatly reduced, may not meet the legislative intention to locate projects in or near urban areas.
Question is simplified.	Does not differentiate between city/town populations greater than 5,000 or counties with population density exceeding 250 persons.

- ➔ **Option 3:** Use the new question (above) with additional points given if a project meets both criteria.

Pros	Cons
Same as those listed above under Option 1 and 2.	Same as listed above.
Projects located both in urban areas and in more densely populated counties would be awarded more points.	

- ➔ **Option 4:** No change to the current population proximity question and points awarded.

Pros	Cons
Retains the higher priority to projects located near urban areas.	Does not achieve the advantages listed for Options 1, 2, and 3.

Stakeholder comments generally favored retaining and simplifying the question. Many of those commenting also supported reducing the points awarded.

After assessing the comments from interested parties, staff revised the population proximity question and the points awarded as shown in the staff recommendation section of this memorandum. The effect of reducing the total number of points from 5 to 3 is shown in the following table:

Category	Current Question Percent of Total Points	Recommended Question and Percent of Total Points
Trails	6.3%	3.8%
State Parks	6.7%	4.1%
Local Parks	7.1%	4.4%
Water Access	7.7%	4.8%

Next Steps

Public comments on the proposed options referenced above were distributed to the Board at the September 14 RCFB meeting. Comments received by October 25 on staff's recommendation as presented in this memorandum will be distributed to the Board electronically in advance of the November meeting.

If the Board approves the recommendation, staff will update Manual #10a, *WWRP Outdoor Recreation Account: Policies and Project Selection*, and send out notices to potential applicants and other interested parties. Adopted changes will affect grant requests beginning with the 2008 grant cycle.

Attachment

- Resolution 2007-26

RESOLUTION #2007-26
Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program
Population Proximity Evaluation Criteria for the
Outdoor Recreation Account

WHEREAS, Chapter 79A.15 RCW established the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) and authorized the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) to adopt policies and rules for the program; and

WHEREAS, the RCFB has adopted evaluation processes and evaluation criteria for projects submitted to the Local Parks, State Parks, Trails, and Water Access categories of the Outdoor Recreation Account; and

WHEREAS, the RCFB desires to incorporate a change to the WWRP policy manual regarding the *Population Proximity* evaluation question used for projects submitted in the Outdoor Recreation Account; and

WHEREAS, the proposed policy which reduces the points awarded for the *Population Proximity* question has been made available for review and comment by individuals and organizations that have expressed an interest in WWRP; and

WHEREAS, final adoption of this policy revision will be incorporated into Manual 10a: *WWRP Outdoor Recreation Account: Policies and Project Selection*;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the evaluation criterion measuring proximity to population be modified as outlined in the staff recommendation section of the memorandum accompanying this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Recreation and Conservation Office staff is directed to take the necessary steps for implementation of this revision beginning with the 2008 grant cycle.

Resolution moved by: _____

Resolution seconded by: _____

Adopted/Defeated/Deferred (underline one)

Date: November 1, 2007 (underline one)