

projects would include (1) NOVA education and enforcement projects, and (2) NOVA and RTP maintenance-operations projects.

The proposal is intended to be in effect only during the period in which the grant funding for these programs is eliminated.

Analysis

In this proposal, the “returned” funds would be awarded to currently active projects funded by the board in 2007 and 2008², by category. For example, returned non-motorized category funds would go only to projects in that category. The awards, however, would not be automatic. Each potential recipient would submit a request, indicating how much is needed and specifically how the funds would be used. Per the current board policy, cost increases allowed by the director are limited to 10 percent of the grant.

This proposal targets highly ranked E&E and M&O projects that are still underway and in which time extensions will work well. The extra funds will allow current sponsors’ staff more time to address recreational NOVA issues in the field. The additional funds will also allow sponsors’ field crews to maintain trail miles. In essence, the combination of contract extension and additional funding will stretch each approved project through the summer and perhaps longer.

Focusing returned dollars on projects now under contract is an efficient way of keeping the money at work. For example:

- Agency applicants and RCO would not need to submit or process new applications
- Current agreements would require only an amendment
- Some existing project staff would likely remain on the job longer
- For a time, some existing recreation areas may avoid closure.

Public Review

On May 22, 2009, RCO staff circulated a draft of this proposal to people on RCO’s “interested in the NOVA Program” and “interested in RTP” mailing lists, including sponsors with active E&E projects and members of the NOVA advisory committee (about 1,100 people). Of the 16 respondents, 15 indicated support for the proposal. One person sought more information but did not express an opinion.

The table in Attachment A contains all comments received through June 10, 2009.

Next Steps

If approved, RCO staff will immediately begin to implement the new policy.

Attachments

Resolution #2009-17

A. Public Comments on the Use of Returned Funds in NOVA and RTP Grant Programs

² The Board approved the lists in September and November 2007 and November 2008.

Resolution #2009-17

Use of Returned Funds in NOVA and RTP Grant Programs

WHEREAS, the Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Program and the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), both administered by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board), have accounted for millions of dollars in grants to nonprofit organizations and local, state, and federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature has reassigned funding for the NOVA Program for the 2009 and 2010 grant cycles, and national sources indicate that Congress may do the same regarding the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP); and

WHEREAS, in both of these cases, limited project funding will still be available due to the relinquishment of unused grant ("returned") funds by current project sponsors; and

WHEREAS, current board policy reserves these funds for NOVA and RTP projects that are either partially-funded or unfunded, with any remaining funds added to the next grants cycle; and

WHEREAS, temporarily modifying this policy during the present economic circumstances would allow these "returned" funds to be put to work more quickly if applied as cost increases to extend currently active NOVA education and enforcement (E&E) projects and NOVA and RTP maintenance projects (M&O); and

WHEREAS, interested people favorably received a proposal implement such a modification; and

WHEREAS, this modification would further the board's strategic goals of funding the best projects as determined by the evaluation process and efficiently managing its resources;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the board does hereby give the RCO director the discretion to allocate "returned" NOVA and RTP funds to extend active E&E and M&O projects, as appropriate, through December 2010; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that such allocations shall be mindful of the board's cost increase policies, including allowing the director approval authority of increases up to 10 percent.

Resolution moved by: _____

Resolution seconded by: _____

Adopted/Defeated/Deferred (underline one)

Date: _____

ATTACHMENT A: SUMMARIZED PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSAL TO TEMPORARILY CHANGE THE RECREATION AND CONSERVATION FUNDING BOARD'S POLICY ON RETURNED NOVA AND RTP FUNDS

Commenter	Summary ³	Comments ⁴
1. Doug Conner, RTP advisory committee, 5/28/09	Supports the proposal	This sounds like a good idea to me. Anything that can be done to keep people and resources in place during these times is a good idea.
2. Sheriff Mike Harum, Chelan County, 5/27/09	Supports the proposal	I agree with the changes.
3. John Keates, Mason Co. Parks, 5/27/09	Supports the proposal	Funneling any returned money to E&E or trail maintenance would be a good move. I'd hope the funds could stay category focused though (i.e. returned motorized funds would still be used for that purpose).
4. Jonn Lunsford, Anacortes Parks-Recreation, 5/26/09	Supports the proposal	I support this change as a stopgap measure to provide funds to successful programs. If in the future, funds are reallocated to NOVA by the legislature, return to the previous policy.
5. Stan Johnson, Richland Parks and Recreation, 5/26/09	Supports the proposal	A great solution for handling returned funds. I endorse this recommendation.
6. Michael Jones, RTP advisory committee, 5/26/09	Supports the proposal	The staff proposal to allocate "returned" funds to existing programs focused on maintenance and education is an effective way to minimize staff time and administrative costs. It also supports ongoing efforts, which is more efficient than starting something new. It also gets the money out faster than a more formal process. It supports the efforts of the federal government to reinvigorate the economy through the stimulus spending bill. I support the staff proposal.
7. Tim Foss, Wenatchee National Forest, 5/26/09	Supports the proposal	I like this proposal and I encourage the board to adopt it.
8. Christine M. Redmond, Department of Natural Resource, 5/26/09	Supports the proposal	This sounds good to me.
9. Su Dowie, Foss Waterway Development Authority, 5/26/09	Supports the proposal	A reasonable and responsible approach in the current economic climate
10. Bradly D Martin, Yakima County Sheriff's Office, 5/25/09	Supports the proposal	We want to see the NOVA funds extended to help keep the Yakima County Sheriff's Office Outdoor Recreation Education and Enforcement Program going. Any funds that would help keep our deputies in the field will help preserve opportunities for the future and help avoid closures.

³ This column is RCO staff's attempt to summarize each respondent's position.

⁴ In some cases, RCO staff has edited the remarks for brevity.

Commenter	Summary ³	Comments ⁴
11.Mike Hayden, 5/24/09	Supports the proposal	The maintenance of our trail system needs to be the top priority for returned money. If we don't keep up good trails, we will lose them. To rebuild and repair will cost more. We don't need to educate or enforce something we won't have. The people who care will take on some of this burden.
12.Susan Ranger, Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests, 5/22/09	Supports the proposal	I fully support the RCO's dispersing returned unused funds to previously approved NOVA and RTP projects. This will allow some of the maintenance and E&E programs to continue. Not only will our Ranger District be horribly affected, but so will every other agency that uses the funds to protect resources through E&E, and to keep trail and other facilities open.
13.John E. Spring, NOVA advisory committee, 5/22/09	Supports the proposal	In reviewing the attached draft, I agree with the proposal as worded.
14.Tim Foss, Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests, 6/5/09	Supports the proposal and introduces a new topic	<p>The proposal to put unused NOVA funds into a pot for redistribution to the highest-ranked projects which are still active is a good one. But, I'd like to recommend a modification to this proposal which I think would strengthen it: Afford grantees a one-time opportunity to extend existing E&E and M&O grants for up to two years. These types of grants are, of course, not normally extended, but given the loss of NOVA funds for 2009 and 2010, it would provide an opportunity to save some money in these grants and thereby have something for the next two years. In essence, it would mean the work that RCO has contracted for by awarding the grant would be accomplished in 3 or 4 years, instead of two. For example: an agency has an existing E&E grant that funds four seasonal ORV rangers. Instead of fielding four rangers this year - and then none in 2010 and 2011 - this agency could field 2 rangers this year, then one in 2010 and one in 2011. I believe the land, resources, and public would be much better served by spreading the field presence out this way.</p> <p>I propose this policy in addition to the one currently on the table because under the existing proposal, if an agency is able to find some savings it's kind of a "crapshoot" as to whether those savings will come back to that agency or to some other entity in the State. Under the scenario I propose, it would make it much easier for grantees to plan a program for the next two years - albeit a greatly reduced one- and provide some stability in service to the land and public.</p>
15.Jeff Lambert, NOVA advisory committee, 5/22/2009	Sought more information; appears to support the proposal Staff responded and clarified.	<p>I want the returned funds to be spent as soon as possible on NOVA projects, but the allocation criteria seem uncertain. The goal to keep recreation areas open or to maintain high-ranked E&E projects seem unlikely. First, the cost of a licensed enforcement officer is quite high and an additional say \$20K is a stop-gap rather than a fix. I acknowledge that RCO knows better than I do how such returned funds might effectively be applied to "highly ranked" E&E or maintenance projects. I don't like providing funding in an unspecified manner.</p> <p>My preference would be to fund projects where less than the full amount was available. The projects are likely to be underway and are on a list with the priority already decided. Keep returned funds in the same category whenever possible.</p>

Commenter	Summary³	Comments⁴
16.Larry Minkler, Washington ATV Association, 5/26/09	Sought more information; no opinion expressed Staff responded and clarified.	Is this a one year action? If this is a legitimate use of these funds and other funding avenues have been exhausted, then short term/emergency use seems prudent. Are non-agency grant applications going to be removed for '09? Why is the policy change needed? What is the time line for this proposal and what is the procedure for changing it back? What information/data is going to the board and when?