

Proposed Changes to the Funding Framework in the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – Urban Wildlife Habitat Category (WWRP - UWH)

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board requests the public submit comments on a proposal to rescind the funding allocation framework for the WWRP – UWH. The funding allocation framework, adopted in 2008, divides the available WWRP – UWH funding by the type of applicant as follows:

- 40% to local agencies, including Native American tribes
- 40% to state agencies
- 20% to fully fund partially funded local agency and Native American tribes' projects, then fully fund partially funded state agency projects, and finally apply any remaining funds to the next highest ranked project(s), regardless of sponsor. Funds remaining, due to an insufficient number of applications by either local agency (including Native American tribes) or state agency sponsors, will be awarded to the next highest ranked project(s) regardless of sponsor.

The board proposes rescinding this framework. In its place, the board would award WWRP – UWH grant funds in ranked order on the application project list regardless of the type of sponsor.

PROS - The advantage to rescinding the policy is that grant funds would be awarded based on competitive scoring results.

CONS – The disadvantage to rescinding the policy is that sponsors would not be guaranteed a portion of funds.

Reason for the Proposed Change

The Legislature added non-profit nature conservancies as eligible sponsors in the WWRP-UWH.¹ The board must revisit its policy on funding allocation within the WWRP - UWH since non-profit organizations are eligible sponsors.

Alternatives Considered

To address the change that allows nonprofit nature conservancies to be eligible in the WWRP - UWH, Recreation and Conservation Office staff presented three options to the board at its meeting on July 13th. See [Item 7B](#) of the meeting materials. The board preferred option 1 and directed staff to present option 1 for public comment. Below are the three options.

¹ [Chapter 149, Laws of 2016](#)

Option 1 – Competitive Allocation

The board allocates WWRP - UWH funds in ranked order on the project list regardless of the type sponsor.

Effect of the Change	Pros	Cons
Funding would no longer be allocated based on the type of project sponsor.	Awards grant funds based on competitive scoring results.	Sponsors not guaranteed a portion of the funds.

Option 2 - 40/40/20 Percent Allocation

The board retains the current funding allocation policy and adds non-profit nature conservancies to the portion of funds awarded to local agencies and Native American tribes.

- 40% local agencies, Native American tribes and non-profit organizations
- 40% state agencies
- 20% fully fund partially funded local agency, Native American tribes, and non-profit organization projects, then fully fund partially funded state agency projects, and finally apply any remaining funds to the next highest ranked project(s), regardless of sponsor. Funds remaining, due to an insufficient number of applications by either local agency, Native American tribes, and non-profit organization or state agency sponsors, will be awarded to the next highest ranked project(s) regardless of sponsor.

Effect of the Change	Pros	Cons
Non-profit organizations added to the funding allocation with local agencies and Native American tribes.	Incorporates non-profits into the framework of the existing policy.	Funding allocation shared between local agencies, non-profit organizations, and Native American tribes.

Option 3 - 30/30/30/10 Percent Allocation

The board distributes funds equally at 30 percent each to local agencies (including Native American tribes), non-profit organizations, and state agencies. Ten percent is remains to fully fund partially funded projects.

- 30% local agencies including Native American tribes
- 30% non-profit organizations
- 30% state agencies
- 10% fully fund partially funded local agency and Native American tribes, then fully fund partially funded non-profit organization projects, then fully fund partially funded state agency projects,

and finally apply any remaining funds to the next highest ranked project(s), regardless of sponsor. Funds remaining, due to an insufficient number of applications by either local agency, Native American tribes, non-profit organization or state agency sponsors, will be awarded to the next highest ranked project(s) regardless of sponsor.

Effect of the Change	Pros	Cons
Funding allocation split equally at 30% between the types of project sponsors and 10% to complete funding of partially funded projects.	Guarantees a portion of funds to specific types of sponsors.	Does not award grant funds on an overall competitive basis.

Background

The WWRP - UWH is one of four categories in the Habitat Conservation Account (HCA). Starting July 1, 2016, the funding allocation to the WWRP - UWH is 15 percent of funding in the HCA.

Since the inception of the WWRP in 1989, the board has awarded \$79 million to 89 projects in the UWH category.

Urban wildlife habitat is defined in state law as “lands that provide habitat important to wildlife in proximity to a metropolitan area.”² The law also directs the board to consider the urban area nearest the WWRP - UWH project.³ Based on these two factors, the board adopted policy that defines an eligible project in the UWH category is:

- In or within 5 miles of an adopted Urban Growth Area of a community in a county that has a population density of at least 200 people per square mile, or
- Within the corporate limits of a community with a population of at least 5,000 or within 5 miles of such a community (or its adopted urban growth area boundary).

Eligible sponsors in the WWRP - UWH category are local agencies including Native American tribes, non-profit nature conservancies, and state agencies.⁴ Local agencies, Native American tribes, and non-profits must provide a matching share that is at least equal to the amount of the grant award.⁵

History of Current Funding Allocation in the Urban Wildlife Category

The Legislature revised the WWRP law in 2005 and one of the changes increased the funding allocation to the WWRP - UWH from fifteen to twenty percent of the Habitat Conservation Account.⁶ In response to this increase in funding, the board reviewed the history of grant awards in the WWRP - UWH because

² [RCW 79A.15.010\(12\)](#)

³ [RCW 79A.15.060\(5\)\(b\)\(i\)](#)

⁴ [RCW 79A.15.010\(5\)](#) defines local agencies as “a city, county, town, federally recognized Indian tribe, special purpose district, port district, or other political subdivision of the state providing services to less than the entire state”.

⁵ [RCW 79A.15.060\(4\)](#)

⁶ [Chapter 303, Laws of 2005](#)

there was a concern that state agencies were receiving a majority of the funding and would benefit the most from the additional money available.

In 2006, staff analysis determined that state agencies were receiving more grants than local agencies and projects were located further from the urban core areas compared to earlier years of the program. See [Item 10](#) from the June 2006 meeting for a thorough history of the UWH and WWRP.

Based on this review, in 2008, the board adopted the current allocation policy for the WWRP - UWH to distribute funding more evenly among local agencies, including Native American tribes, and state agencies.

Effect of Board Funding Allocation Policy Since 2008

The board's current policy took effect starting with the 2007-2009 biennium. Overall, the WWRP - UWH funding allocation policy is achieving its original intent to ensure an equal distribution of funds among local and state agency sponsors when the board awards the grants. However, based on analysis of projects completed or near completion, there is not an equal distribution of funds since the policy started in 2007-2009 biennium.

Chart 1 shows the funding amounts by the type of sponsor. The WWRP - UWH allocation policy applied in the last five biennium. In three out of five of those biennia, more WWRP - UWH funding went to state agency sponsors than local agency sponsors.⁷

Chart 2 shows the number of projects by the type of sponsor. Since 1999-2001 biennium, the number of projects by type of sponsor has remained equal ranging between two to six projects for both state and local agency sponsors.

⁷ In the 2009-2011 biennium, the Legislature exercised their discretion to alter the ranked project list and the board policy did not apply.

Chart 1

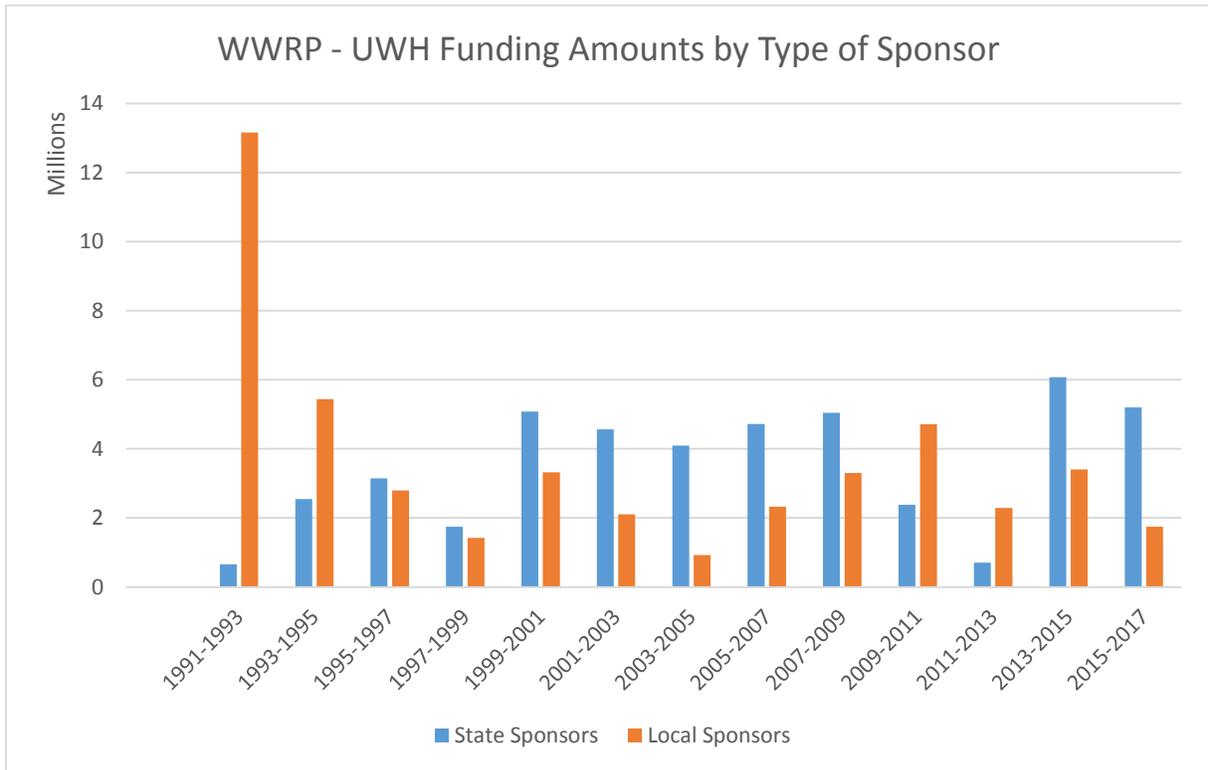
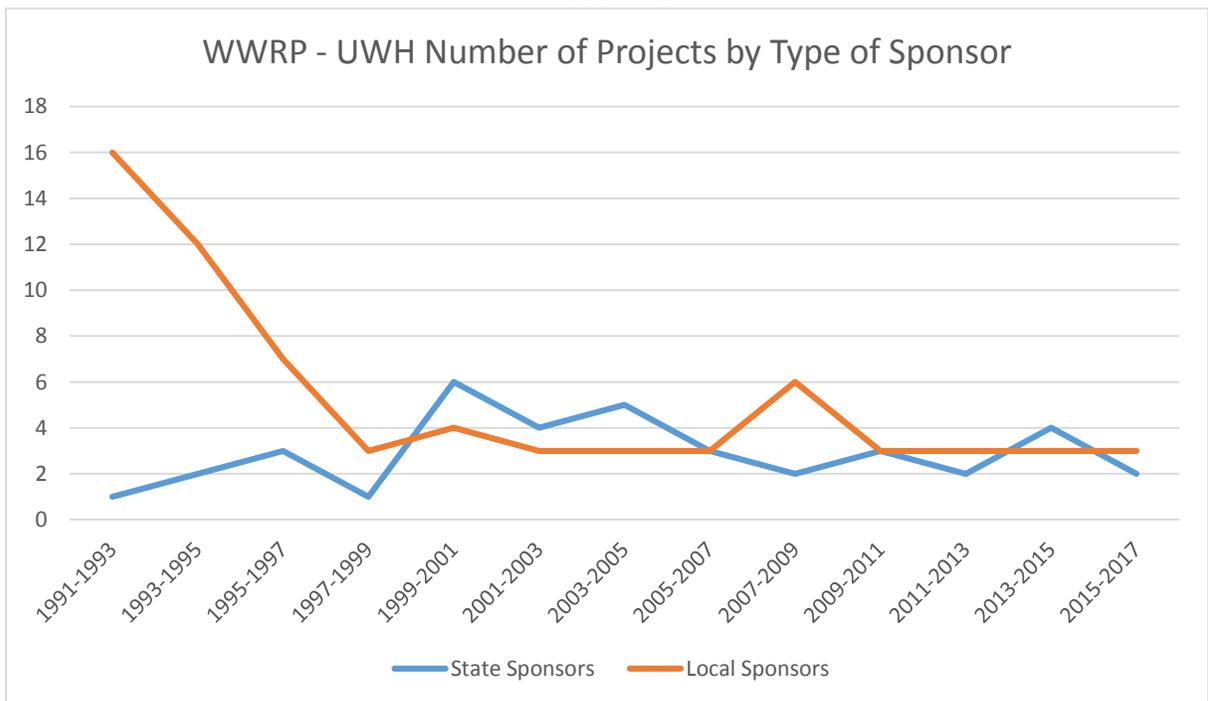


Chart 2



The reasons why the board policy is not meeting the intended results to provide equal funding among state and local agency sponsors could be:

- There are less applications from local sponsors,
- State agencies are requesting more funding, or
- Local sponsors are not completing projects as originally funded.

Strategic Plan Link

Developing policy to allocate funding in WWRP addresses Goals 2 and 3 in the board's [Strategic Plan](#).

Goal 2: We achieve a high level of accountability in managing the resources and responsibilities entrusted to us.

Goal 3: We deliver successful projects by inviting competition and by using broad public participation and feedback, monitoring, assessment, and adaptive management.

Next Steps

Recreation and Conservation Office staff will consider comments received and prepare final proposal for the board's decision at the October 2016 meeting.