

Multistate Conservation Grant Program

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1. Overview of the MSCGP

a. What is the MSCGP?

- The Multistate Conservation Grant Program ("MSCGP") provides funding for wildlife and sport fish restoration projects identified as priority projects by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (the "Association").
- These high-priority projects address problems affecting states on a regional or national basis.
- Project types that are generally selected for funding are: biological research/training; species population status research; outreach and data collection regarding hunter/angler participation; hunter/aquatic education; economic value of fishing/hunting; and regional or multistate habitat needs assessments.

b. Who administers the MSCGP?

- The MSCGP is cooperatively administered by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Division of Wildlife Sport Fish Restoration Program (USFWS-WSFR).
- AFWA administers the grant application process, providing oversight, coordination, and guidance for the MSCGP while the USFWS-WSFR awards, manages, and distributes the grant funding for projects dedicated to fish and wildlife restoration.

c. Where does the funding come from?

- Funding is available each calendar year from the following resources:
 1. **Wildlife Restoration Account:** WR funding is collected from the excise tax that manufacturers, producers, and importers pay on shooting, archery, and angling equipment.
 2. **Sport Fish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund:** SFR funding is collected from the excise tax that recreational boaters pay on fuel and electric motors.

d. What are the MSCGP's statutory requirements?

- The Fish and Wildlife Programs Improvement and National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act of 2000, P.L. 106-408 amended the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 777m) and the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 669h-2) and established funding for the Multistate Conservation Grant Program.
- Under this Act:
 1. The Secretary of Interior may make grants only to:
 - a. A state or group of states;
 - b. The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service or a state or group of states for the purpose of carrying out the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation; and
 - c. A nongovernmental organization.
 2. The Secretary of the Interior may only award grants for projects identified on a priority recommendation list of wildlife or sport fish restoration projects submitted by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies.
- Wildlife Restoration & Sport Fish Restoration funds can only be spent on conservation projects that benefit sport fish, wild birds, and wild mammals. Conservation projects must meet at least ONE of the following criteria to be considered for funding:
 1. The project benefits *at least* 26 states
 2. The project benefits the majority (over 50%) of states in a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service region (visit: <http://www.fws.gov/where/> to review these regions.)
 3. The project benefits the majority (over 50%) of states in a regional association of fish and wildlife agencies.

e. How much money is available each cycle?

- **Up to \$6 million** is available each calendar year from the following resources:
 1. **Wildlife Restoration Account:**
 - » Up to \$3 million available
 2. **Sport Fish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund:**
 - » Up to \$3 million available

f. Actual Budget from 2018 Cycle

Wildlife Restoration		
2018 Original Budget Authority		3,000,000.00
For Survey		
Planned 2018 Sequester (6.6%)	(198,000.00)	
2018 Survey	(321,208.00)	
2017 Sequester return	207,000.00	
2018 Survey Subtotal	(312,208.00)	
2017 Obligated Grants		
2017 Recoveries	24,706.00	
2018 Available		2,712,498.00
Sport Fish Restoration		
2018 Original Budget Authority		3,000,000.00
For Survey		
Planned 2018 Sequester (6.6%)	(198,000.00)	
2018 Survey	(321,208.00)	
2017 Sequester return	207,000.00	
2018 Survey Subtotal	(312,208.00)	
2017 Obligated Grants		
2017 recoveries	24,706.00	
2018 Available		2,712,498.00
Total Available	5,424,996.00	
2018 WESTAT needs:	(2,618,611.00)	
	2,806,385.00	

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3. The Grant Application & Selection Process

1. **National Conservation Needs: Solicitation & Selection**

November – February

- In November, the MSCGP Coordinator solicits National Conservation Needs from the Association's Committees and the four Regional Associations of state fish and wildlife agencies. NCNs are due to the MSCGP Coordinator in February. The National Grants Committee reviews and scores the NCNs.
- The USFWS announces the projected cycle budget at the Association/USFWS Bi-Annual Budget Meeting.

March

- The National Grants Committee meets and selects NCNs for state directors' approval at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference.

Any attempt to discuss an NCN with a committee member outside of a committee meeting is considered lobbying and is strictly prohibited.

2. **Announcement of Opportunity/ Letter of Intent Solicitation**

March - April

- In late March or early April, the USFWS posts the Announcement of Opportunity on grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov/>) and its website (<http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/>).
- The MSCGP Coordinator sends out a LOI Solicitation Letter to potential grant applicants.

3. **Letter of Intent Review & Full Proposal Invitation**

May

- In May, the National Grants Committee reviews submitted LOIs and selects the most competitive to invite to submit full proposals.

LOIs are reviewed 3 times:

1. **Eligibility, Content, and Format Review:** The Association's MSCGP Coordinator reviews the LOIs to ensure that all eligibility, content, and formatting requirements have been met.
2. **Committee Technical NCN Review:** The Association committees review the LOIs that correspond with their NCNs. The committees score the LOIs and provide comments/recommendations to the National Grants Committee.
3. **NGC Review:** Each member of the National Grants Committee reviews and scores the LOIs. Applicants with the highest scored LOIs are invited to submit a Full Proposal.

June

- In June, applicants are notified whether or not they have been invited to submit a full proposal.
- *Any attempt to discuss a LOI with a committee member outside of a committee meeting is considered lobbying and is strictly prohibited.*

4. Full Grant Proposal Review

July

- Full proposals are due to AFWA. AFWA and the USFWS reviews each proposal for eligibility.

August

- Full proposals are evaluated by the National Grants Committee.
- USFWS announces the actual cycle budget at the Association/USFWS Bi-Annual Budget Meeting.

Full Grant Proposals are reviewed 2 times:

1. **Content, Format, and Eligibility Review:** The Association MSCGP Coordinator reviews the Full Proposals to ensure that all content and formatting requirements have been met. The USFWS MSCGP Coordinator reviews the Full Proposals and Federal Forms to ensure that all applicants meet the eligibility requirements.
2. **NGC Review:** Every proposal is individually reviewed and scored by the eight members of the National Grants Committee. The proposals are ranked by score.

5. National Grants Committee's Annual Meeting

September

- The National Grants Committee meets during the Association's Annual Meeting and prepares a "priority list" of projects for State Directors' consideration and majority approval at the Business Meeting.

NGC Annual Meeting

- The National Grants Committee convenes during the Association's Annual Meeting in September to engage in a group discussion of the Full Proposals.
- Applicants and other interested parties may attend the NGC Meeting. However, applicants are only allowed to speak about their grant proposal if asked a question by a member of the National Grants Committee.
- The NGC creates a priority list of projects based on full proposal ranking and the budget available for the cycle.
- At the conclusion of the meeting, the National Grants Committee votes whether to approve the priority list.

Any attempt to discuss a Grant with a committee member outside of a committee meeting is considered lobbying and is strictly prohibited.

State Director Approval

The National Grants Committee's Priority List must be approved by vote of a majority of the heads of State fish and wildlife agencies (or their designees); and must be submitted no later than October 1st of each fiscal year to the Assistant Director for Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

6. AFWA's Priority List of Projects

October

- AFWA submits its Priority List of Projects to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service by the mandatory October 1 deadline.

AFWA's Priority List

- The National Grants Committee's Priority List provides the Association's recommendation of projects that best address the cycle's NCNs.
- The MSCGP Coordinator sends the National Grants Committee's Priority List to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service by the mandatory October 1st Deadline.
- Projects on the Priority List are ranked based on the scores received during the Full Proposal Review.
- The USFWS is required by law to select projects for funding from the Association's Priority List. The USFWS must also publish the list in the Federal Register.

USFWS Final Review

- After receiving the proposals on the priority list, the USFWS reviews proposals (though a significant portion of the USFWS' review typically occurs concurrently with the Association's review to expedite the process and to identify problems early in the selection process).
- The USFWS ensures receipt of federal application forms; confirms budget costs are allowable, allocable, and reasonable; conducts a debarment/suspension check; ensures NEPA and ESA compliance, if applicable; and reviews financial management systems of applicants to ensure costs charged to the grant can be properly tracked.

7. What happens next?

December

- The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service selects projects from the AFWA Priority List, announces its funding decisions and distributes grant award letters and agreements.
- Grantees do not have to accept funding and can negotiate certain conditions. Grantees will be asked to sign a grant agreement (form 3-1552) and monies will be available starting January 1st.