

Appendix D

Open Project Selection Process

Review and Update

The Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) is an integral part of New Hampshire's administration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program. The OPSP satisfies state and federal needs for public notification and knowledge about the LWCF program. It ensures the distribution of LWCF assistance in a nondiscriminatory manner as well as a fair and equitable evaluation of all applications. The OPSP provides a measurable link, through published selection criteria, between the priorities established in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and the LWCF grants for land acquisition and facility development projects.

The OPSP's ranking criteria will continue to reflect those issues identified in the latest edition of the state's SCORP. Certain OPSP criteria may be modified or added from year-to-year depending upon LWCF administrative and planning staff, and OPSP Advisory Panel discussions. Modifications and additions must be based on the SCORP and approved by the National Park Service.

New Hampshire's use of the OPSP began in 1981, coincidental with the sharp decline in federal funding for the LWCF program. The OPSP has evolved through several grant rounds and it continues to serve the purpose of helping to select the best projects with the most benefits. This evolution has included modifications to the selection criteria to more fairly reflect need based on population growth. Also, more emphasis has been placed on a community's ability to pay for and maintain a proposed project. The qualities of the particular project and the numbers of potential recreationists that may benefit from the completed project have also become relatively more important as the OPSP process has evolved. Protection of certain outstanding natural areas has likewise grown in importance and more emphasis will be given to wetlands in the 2013-2018 SCORP.

OPSP Advisory Panel

The Open Project Selection Process Advisory Panel was formed in 1981. Membership on the Panel has varied from year to year but has always maintained a core of potential LWCF users and outdoor recreation interest groups. Members represent towns, cities, school districts, and state agencies as well as the conservation community. Members also represent minority populations, the elderly, and the handicapped. The Commissioner of the Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) who also serves as State Liaison Officer (SLO) for LWCF appoints the approximately 18-member Advisory Panel as needed and as vacancies occur.

The OPSP Advisory Panel meets approximately twice a year at the request of the SLO or designated DRED staff. Generally, one meeting is called to review and recommend possible program rules and changes to the selection criteria based on the SCORP. A second yearly meeting takes place at the conclusion of grant project application evaluations. At this meeting the OPSP Advisory Panel is requested to review the scoring committee evaluations. After both meetings, the advice and recommendations of the OPSP Advisory Panel are forwarded to the SLO for his/her review and subsequent application to the National Park Service for final approval.

Project Selection Criteria

The project selection criteria are designed to select the best of the project applications from each grant round. For most criteria, a range of points is allowed. The final number of points awarded to each project proposal is simply the summation of all the points given to each criterion. The exact numbers of points, and the selection criteria themselves, may vary from year to year; however, one important goal of the program goal is to fairly and equitably distribute the LWCF grant funds throughout the state. Recommendations for revisions may originate from the SCORP, from DRED or from the Office of Energy and Planning (OEP) staff, or from the OPSP Advisory Panel. All proposed revisions to the OPSP must be reviewed, evaluated, and approved by the National Park Service