

Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Strategic Plan

Overview

The Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund was established in July, 1995 through L.D. 717, An Act to Establish the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund. As stated in Title 12, MRSA c. 714, section 7783,

"The fund is for the sole purpose of maintaining, improving and expanding state and local natural resource conservation programs and associated compatible public uses in accordance with the strategic plan provided for by section 7788, subsection 5, paragraph A."

Title 12, MRSA c. 714, section 7788 charges the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Board with adopting a strategic plan for each of the funding categories listed in section 7787. As the law states, "The strategic plan must identify the priority areas for funding...using the criteria listed in section 7789." This strategic plan is intended to fulfill the requirements of Title 12, MRSA c. 714, section 7788 stated above, and to provide direction to the Board and natural resource agencies on the long-term funding priorities of the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund.

Guiding Principles

The Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Board will be guided by the following principles as it considers grant requests during the next six years, through December, 2007. It will give priority to projects that most substantially accomplish one or more of these objectives:

- conserve Maine's outdoor heritage and demonstrate outstanding natural-resource or recreational benefits;
- maximize degree and diversity of public/private partnerships or other levels of matching funds; projects with a cash match of 1/3 or higher are encouraged (see grant application guidelines for further detail on what constitutes cash match);
- form alliances between natural resource agencies, interest groups and organizations based on shared visions and mutual responsibility;
- take a preventive approach to addressing natural resource problems;
- address natural resource concerns of statewide significance and/or broad geographical distribution;
- demonstrate consistency with the strategic plan or the mission of the sponsoring Natural Resource Agency; and
- promote innovative and cost-effective solutions to natural-resource or recreational issues.

Fund Distribution Categories and Grant Criteria

As specified in Title 12, MRSA c. 714, section 7787, only Natural Resource Agencies may apply for a Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund grant. They may do so independently or in partnership with other entities. The Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Board encourages non-governmental organizations interested in projects to contact the appropriate Natural Resource Agency listed in Attachment (C) to submit a grant application.

Dollar amount of grants will vary. The Board will allocate funds according to four major fund distribution categories outlined in Title 12, MRSA c. 714, section 7787 and stated below. The percentage of funds allocated to each of the four categories is also outlined in Title 12, MRSA c. 714, section 7787 and stated below.

1. Fisheries and wildlife, and habitat conservation projects (35%).

The Board shall consider whether a project involves:

- a. A species, species group, natural community or ecosystem adversely affected due to lack of management or habitat loss;
- b. A species, species group, natural community or ecosystem that is adversely affected due to unusual vulnerability to human or natural disturbances, or requirements for a special or limited habitat type;
- c. Measurable benefits vital to the future welfare of a species or species group;
- d. Education about fisheries, wildlife, natural community and habitat conservation;
- e. Equipment and training to improve efficiencies in fisheries, wildlife and habitat conservation efforts;
- f. Species, species group, natural community or ecosystem of statewide or regional significance; or
- g. Environmental monitoring.

2. Acquisition and management of public lands, parks, wildlife conservation areas and public access and outdoor recreation sites and facilities (35%).

Land acquisition projects may involve a range of land types (eg. forestlands, agricultural lands, wetlands, grasslands) that support wildlife conservation and public recreation. The Board shall consider whether a project involves:

- a. Public recreational opportunities or lands of statewide or regional significance;
- b. Species, species group, natural community or ecosystem of statewide or regional significance;
- c. Habitat of a threatened or endangered species listed under state or federal law;
- d. Rare or exemplary natural communities or ecosystems as determined by the State's Natural Areas Program database;
- e. Rare or exemplary geological features;
- f. Areas with proximity to lands dedicated to conservation purposes or public recreation or with access to lands or waters with significant natural resource or recreational values;
- g. Education about the management and use of public lands, parks, wildlife conservation areas, and public access and outdoor recreation sites and facilities;
- h. Equipment and training to improve efficiencies in the management of public lands, parks, wildlife conservation areas, and public access and outdoor recreation sites and facilities; or
- i. Development and maintenance of outdoor recreational facilities and access sites.

3. Endangered and threatened species conservation projects (15%).

The Board shall consider whether a project involves:

- a. A species or species group listed as endangered or threatened under state or federal law;
- b. The habitat of one or more species listed as endangered or threatened species under state or federal law;
- c. A species or species group not listed as threatened or endangered but, based on the best available scientific information, potentially warranting listing in near future;
- d. A species, species group, natural community or ecosystem that has been documented as being in decline or recognized as being at risk of extirpation from the State;
- e. Any species, group of species, natural community or ecosystem thought in the best professional judgment of biologists to be in decline or in danger of extirpation from the State but whose status is undetermined;
- f. Education about conservation of rare, threatened and endangered species, species of special concern, and exemplary natural communities;
- g. Equipment and training to improve efficiencies in the conservation of rare, threatened and endangered species, species of special concern, and exemplary natural communities; or
- h. Environmental monitoring.

4. Natural resources law enforcement and protection of public health (15%).

The Board shall consider whether a project involves:

- a. A species or species group adversely affected by lack of management or habitat loss;
- b. Public health or safety concerns of statewide or regional significance;
- c. Environmental education for the public or law enforcement personnel;
- d. Cross-training between natural resources state agencies;
- e. Equipment and training to improve efficiencies in natural resources law enforcement;
- f. Education of the public about natural resource laws and enforcement; or
- g. Environmental monitoring.

Definitions of Terms Used in Strategic Plan

(from Title 12, MRSA c. 714, section 7781)

1. **Acquisition.** "Acquisition" means fee ownership, easement, lease, right-of-way and other less-than fee interests in land.
2. **Board.** "Board" means the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Board.
3. **Matching funds.** "Matching funds" means any combination of public and private funds used in conjunction with the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, including, but not limited to, private contributions of cash or securities, money from municipal or other public agencies, money from a federal matching program, in-kind contributions or any combination thereof.

4. **Natural resources agencies.** "Natural resources agencies" means state agencies, bureaus, boards, commissions or other instrumentalities having jurisdiction over the protection of the State's natural resources.
5. **Public-private partnership.** "Public-private partnership" means any partnership between federal agencies, state agencies or individuals or any combination of federal agencies, state agencies or individuals, including corporations and private persons or organizations, where at least 1/3 of the funding is contributed by a nongovernmental organization or individual.
6. **Wildlife.** "Wildlife" means wild organisms, including vertebrate, invertebrate and plant species.