

2014 Illinois State Wildlife Grant Program

Guidelines for Submitting Project Pre-Proposals

Introduction

As part of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Federal Aid Program, State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program funds are distributed specifically for the protection and management of non-game species in greatest need of conservation and their habitats, which are identified in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.

The complete Illinois Wildlife Action Plan can be found at the website address:

<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/IWAP/Documents/WildlifeActionPlanFinal.pdf>

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Resource Conservation (ORC), is responsible for requesting and administering State Wildlife Grants (SWG) to support the updating, monitoring and implementation of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan. Annual State Wildlife Grant allocations to each state / territory are apportioned according to the states' population and land area, and are contingent upon annual appropriations by Congress.

To help ensure that monies are applied to projects that most efficiently and effectively address the needs identified by the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources has developed a competitive grant process for the State Wildlife Grants. Although State Wildlife Grant funds can be used for a variety of projects, they cannot be used for:

- a. Law enforcement and education, unless minor or incidental and essential to success of project that conserves species in greatest need of conservation and their habitats. Minor is considered to be no more than 10% of the total project cost.
- b. Wildlife-associated recreation projects
- c. Nuisance wildlife and wildlife damage, except as they relate to species in greatest need of conservation and their habitats

Desired projects range from one to three years. Projects requesting more than 3 years may be considered, however extensive justification for such projects is required. Projects less than \$20,000 will not be considered.

Overview of State Wildlife Grant Program Schedule

- In September 2014, IDNR's Office of Resource Conservation issues a request for pre-proposals to the conservation community for that year's SWG funding allocation.
- A confidential review of each pre-proposal is conducted by an IDNR team comprised of Wildlife Action Plan Campaign Leads and other relevant staff in

accordance with the scoring criteria described below. Projects are ranked according to their total score and a sub-set of projects are selected until all available funding has been encumbered. The selected pre-proposals are then forwarded to the Office of Resource Conservation Director for final approval.

- Successful applicants are notified and asked to develop a final grant documents including a detailed budget. Projects which were not chosen for lack of funds, but deemed acceptable, will be placed on a waiting list.
- Projects may be rejected as they move through the Federal Aid Committee review process and be deemed unacceptable for this program.
- Applicants on the waiting list will be notified of this status and will then have the option of submitting a full proposal should an opening develop or withdrawing their proposal and resubmitting the following year. If such an opening occurs then the next ranked applicant from the waiting list will be notified.
- In January, the IDNR Federal Aid Program Coordinator/staff takes over the grant administration process for the successful applicants and will host a mandatory meeting for successful applicants and their project managers. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss what is expected of each applicant, form requirements, etc.
- In May, draft grant documents are submitted to the ORC Federal Aid Coordinator for review. Draft documents are sent to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for comment.
- Comments from ORC Federal Aid and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service staff are forwarded to each applicant. After comments are addressed by the applicant, final documents are submitted to the ORC Federal Aid Coordinator for processing.
- Upon written approval by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and notification by IDNR-Federal Aid Coordinator that all supporting documents (e.g., contract, Memorandum of Understanding) have been properly submitted and executed, the project may proceed.

Timetable

September, 2014	Request for pre-proposals is distributed
October 24, 2014	Pre-proposals due to Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator by 5:00 pm.
November 21, 2014	Evaluation Committee members complete review and ranking of proposals.
December 2014	Evaluation Committee meets, as needed, to review and provide recommendations for each proposal to ORC Office Director.
December 2014	Pre-proposals are reviewed and approved by ORC Office Director. Final determinations made by December 19, 2014.
January 9, 2015	All applicants are notified of pre-proposal status. Applicants of successful pre-proposals are requested to submit full proposals.
January 2015 (During the week of January 19, 2015)	Meeting of IDNR Project Managers and applicants for approved pre-proposals to address preparation of final Grant documents for IDNR Director and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval.
April 27, 2015	Final Grant documents are due to ORC Federal Aid Coordinator. Draft Grant Proposals/Grant Segments are sent to U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for comment.
May - June 2015	ORC Federal Aid Coordinator completes required reviews (e.g., Section 7, NEPA) prior to sending final Grant documents to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Applicants respond to any comments on draft Grant Agreement from U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
June - September 2015	Proposals reviewed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Work may be initiated only upon written approval by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service AND an executed Work Order or contract.

NOTE: All State Wildlife Grant funding for Federal Fiscal Year 2014 must be obligated (have a Grant Agreement and Grant Proposal approved by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service) by September 30, 2015.

More information on past projects funded through the Illinois State Wildlife Grant Program may be found at:
<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/IWAP/Pages/StateWildlifeGrants.aspx>

Instructions for completing pre-proposals

- Download the pre-proposal form:
<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/IWAP/Pages/default.aspx>
- Pre-proposals exceeding three pages will not be accepted. Each section on the pre-proposal application has a set length to ensure the page length will not be exceeded. Do not send attachments or supplemental information.
- Projects requesting more than three years may be considered, however extensive justification for such projects is required.
- Submit completed 2014 pre-proposal form via email by October 24, 2014 at 5:00 pm to james.renn@illinois.gov.
- Pre-proposals must contain an electronic signature of the applicant. If an electronic signature is not available, then a signed and dated hard-copy of the pre-proposal should be sent to: James Renn, IDNR-Office of Resource Conservation, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702.

Applicant Information: The information included in this section will be used for all correspondence regarding this project.

Project Title: Include a brief, but descriptive title of your project.

Project Description: Include a brief (i.e., two to three sentences) description of the project. This section will not be evaluated numerically, but sets a useful context for reviewers.

Type of Project: Identify if the project is implementation or planning.

1. **Implementation:** Most projects fall into this category and require 35% of the total project costs as non-federal match. Examples of implementation projects include: monitoring of species in greatest need of conservation or their habitats, habitat restoration, research, implementation of conservation actions.

2. **Planning** – These projects require 25% of the total project costs as non-federal match. Planning projects are limited to those that 1) update, modify or revise the Plan including writing, printing, production, on-line production of the Plan; 2) gather public opinion (i.e., surveys, polling, public meetings, focus groups & other methodologies to update, modify or revise the Plan); or 3) bring State and other conservation partners together to update, modify or revise the Plan.

- All match funds must be available during the effective dates of the approved Grant.
- Match sources available prior to, or after the period of the approved Grant, are not eligible.

Budget: For the pre-proposal budget, include State Wildlife Grant funds requested and non-federal match. Sources of match need not be identified for pre-proposals, but this information will be required for final Grant documents for successful applicants. Match is based on the total project cost.

Evaluation of the budget will be based on whether the funding (federal and state share) is commensurate with the tasks identified in the objectives. It is the committee's intent to provide the most efficient and effective use of funds for a diversity of projects and to fund the maximum number of projects manageable by available staff.

(Maximum: **10 points**)

Funding Theme: Projects submitted for funding should address one of the following funding themes:

- Assessing wildlife health and identifying actions needed to promote wellness in Species in Greatest Need of Conservation
- Providing demographic or life history information for Illinois Species in Greatest Need of Conservation where limited knowledge exists
- Implementing conservation actions for Illinois Species in Greatest Need of Conservation that are well documented or part of established plans
- Inventorying Species in Greatest Need of Conservation or their habitats in Conservation Opportunity Areas
- Identifying and/or prioritizing conservation actions in priority landscapes
- Documenting the effects of invasive species on Species in Greatest Need of Conservation

This section will not be evaluated numerically, but sets a useful context for reviewers when evaluating the subsequent sections.

Need: Provide a clear description of the need to be met, the problem to be solved, or the opportunity to be exploited. A sound and rational justification for undertaking the project is needed. Clearly indicate how the proposed project addresses one or more of the conservation needs identified within the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.

This component will be evaluated on its clarity in identifying the problem or opportunity to be addressed. This section is important because it provides the basis for the remainder of the project description. (Maximum: **20 points**)

Objectives: Identify what is to be accomplished within the time, money and staffing allocated. Each task should have a recognizable end point and should be as quantifiable or verifiable as possible. Depending upon the scope of the project, it may be useful to divide the project into Jobs. Each Job would then have one or more objective(s).

For evaluating this component, consideration will be given as to whether the objectives are realistic and achievable, and if the project clearly states how the objectives will be accomplished. The objectives should identify the species in greatest need of conservation and/or their habitats (see <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/IWAP/Pages/default.aspx> for a list of the species and habitats).

(Maximum: **20 points**)

Approach: Describe how the objectives will be accomplished, including key personnel and cooperators, project location, and methods and procedures to be used. A complete, clear, and concise description is needed to ensure efficient and effective project implementation.

The approach will be evaluated by completeness and merit of the actions, activities, methods and procedures that will be used. (Maximum: **10 points**)

Anticipated Outcomes and Benefits to Species in Greatest Need of Conservation and Their Habitats: Evaluation of this component is based on how the outcomes and benefits affect species in greatest need of conservation or their habitats. Consideration will also be given to how the project supports ongoing planning or implementation of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.

Indicate what the outcome and benefits will be as a result of your project. Describe the benefits to species in greatest need of conservation and their habitats. Describe how your project helps implement the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan and/or revises its objectives. (Maximum: **20 points**)