

State Wildlife Grant Program

Guidelines for Submitting Project Pre-Proposals for 2009

INTRODUCTION

As part of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Federal Aid Program, State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program funds are distributed to states 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. In order to be eligible for these funds, Congress charged each state and territory with developing a state Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan (CWCP) now called the Wildlife Action Plan. The complete Illinois Wildlife Action Plan can be found at the website address: <http://dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildliferesources/theplan/>.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Office of Resource Conservation (ORC), is responsible for requesting and administering State Wildlife Grants (SWG) to funds to support the updating, monitoring, and implementing the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan. Annual SWG 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 IDNR is reinstating a competitive grant process for SWG Funds. Although SWG 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 projects 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 with federal requests of \$10,000 - \$500,000. Projects requesting more than 3 years or more than \$500,000 may be considered, however extensive justification for such projects is required.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document provides both state and federal guidelines for the 2009 SWG funding allocated to Illinois. This document contains three separate Sections as described below:

Section I. Overview of IDNR Competitive Grant Program for SWG 2009

This Section explains the five phase process of the IDNR Competitive Grant Program for SWG.

These phases include:

- Request for Pre-Proposals (Phase I),
- Approval of Pre-Proposals (Phase II),
- Development of Full Grant Proposals/Grant Segments (Phase III),

- Implementation (Phase IV),
- Coordination with the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (Phase V).

A timetable or schedule for the SWG funding (Phases I – III) is also provided in this Section.

Section II. Instructions for Completion and Submission of the On-Line Application Form for Project Pre-Proposals

This Section provides the completion instructions for the Pre-proposal application. Evaluation scoring criteria for the Budget, Need, Relationship to the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, Objectives, and Approach portions of the application form are also provided. Further, instructions for electronic submittal of completed Pre-proposal application forms are included.

Section III. Federal SWG Administrative Guidelines to States

This Section contains the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administrative guidelines (effective date November 1, 2009) to state fish and wildlife agencies. These administrative guidelines provide guidance for states to consistently administer the SWG program and accomplish the purposes intended by Congress.

SECTION I. OVERVIEW OF IDNR COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM FOR SWG, 2009.

The IDNR Competitive Grant Program for SWG involves five phases. Each phase, including the time line for each step, is described below.

Phase I

- In November, the IDNR's Office of Resource Conservation, Watershed Protection Section (WPS) issues a request for pre-proposals to the conservation community for the 2009 SWG funding allocation.
- A confidential review of each pre-proposal is conducted by ORC–WPS in accordance with the scoring criteria described in Section II. 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 Federal Aid Committee for review. (IDNR's Federal Aid Committee comprises resource managers and administrators from within the Office of Resource Conservation; the Chairperson of the committee is appointed by the ORC Office Director.)

Phase II

- By the end of March, the technical feasibility of each project is evaluated by ORC biologists.
- Based on the results of the technical review, a sub-set of pre-proposals is forwarded to the ORC Office Director by the Federal Aid Committee.
- An ORC Grant Project Manager is assigned to each pre-proposal selected in the previous step.

Phase III

In April, successful applicants are notified and they begin developing final grant documents, including a detailed budget, according to ORC Federal Aid guidelines.

- Projects may be rejected as they move through the Federal Aid Committee review process and be deemed unacceptable for this program. Projects which were not chosen for lack of funds,

but deemed acceptable, will be placed on a waiting list.

- Applicants on this 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 April, the IDNR Federal Aid Program Coordinator/staff takes over the grant administration process for the successful applicants and will host a mandatory meeting in April 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 April through July, 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) have been properly submitted and executed, the project may proceed.

Phase IV

All applicants must submit a report to the IDNR Grant Project Manager describing in detail the progress made on their respective grant. One year grants require a final report, whereas multi-year grants require report annually, plus a final report at the end of the project.

Phase V

The IDNR - WPS will compile all data from applicant's annual / final reports and communicate that information to the Illinois Fish and Wildlife Action Team. The Illinois Fish and Wildlife Action Team, chaired by the director of IDNR, consists of 25 key state-wide wildlife and habitat conservation partners throughout Illinois. The Action Team is charged with ensuring that actions described in the Action Plan become on-the-ground results, facilitating communication and collaboration among organizations, and shaping future priorities for wildlife and habitat conservation through updates to the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.)

TIMETABLE FOR SWG 2009 COMPETITIVE GRANTS

Jan-Feb, 2009	Request for pre-proposals is distributed
February 6, 2010	Pre-proposals due to Federal Aid Committee Chair by COB (including both the online and a signed and dated hard-copy submission).
February 22, 2010	Ranked Pre-proposals sent to ORC Federal Aid Committee members.
February 23 – March 26, 2010	ORC Federal Aid Committee meets, as needed, to review and provide recommendations for each proposal to ORC Office Director.
March 31, 2010	Pre-proposals have been reviewed and selected pre-proposals approved by ORC Office Director.
April 2010	All applicants are notified of pre-proposal status. Applicants of successful pre-proposals are requested to submit full proposals.
April 2010 (During the week of April 19, 2010)	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.
July 1, 2010	Final Grant documents are due to ORC Federal Aid Coordinator. Draft Grant Narratives are sent to U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for comment.
July – August 2010	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. Also, work to be completed on the grant contract with a grantee. Applicants respond to any comments on draft Grant Proposals and Grant Agreement from U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
	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 Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) or contract.

NOTE: The proposed schedule identified above, after April 2010, can be adjusted (expedited or extended) depending on specific needs of any given project. However, all State Wildlife Grant funding for Federal Fiscal Year 2009 must be obligated (have a Grant Agreement and Grant Proposal approved by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service) by September 30, 2010. All 2010 SWG funds must be obligated by September 30, 2011.

More information on the State Wildlife Grant Program may be found at: <http://federalaid.fws.gov/swg/swg.html>
 Historical information can be found at: http://www.teaming.com/state_wildlife_grants.htm
 For definitions and lists of Illinois' species in greatest need of conservation, see:
<http://dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildliferesources/theplan/species.htm>

Section II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION AND SUBMISSION OF THE ON-LINE APPLICATION FORM FOR PROJECT PRE-PROPOSALS

Guidelines for submission of the on-line application form for a project pre-proposal

- Complete the online pre-proposal form: (<http://dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildliferesources/theplan/swggrant/login.asp>) by February 6, 2010.
- Each text box has a limited number of characters with those limits listed by the box.
- Only pre-proposals that adhere to the character limit will be considered. Additional supporting documents are not necessary.
- Projects requesting more than three years and more than \$500,000 may be considered, however extensive justification for such projects is required.
- Submit signed and dated hard-copy of the on-line pre-proposal by February 6, 2010 to: James Renn, IDNR-Watershed Protection Section, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62701.

Approved projects:

Successful applicants can follow this link to see written instructions on what steps will be necessary for submitting a FULL Grant Proposal:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildliferesources/theplan/swggrant/>

Approved, but unfunded projects:

Projects which are deemed acceptable, but for which sufficient funds are lacking, will be placed on a waiting list. Applicants will be notified of this status and will then have the option of submitting a full proposal (to be placed on the waiting list) or withdrawing the proposal and resubmitting at a later time. Applicants will be notified if funds become available. Projects may be rejected, even if adequate funding is available, should the Federal Aid Committee deem the project unacceptable for this program.

Instructions for Completion of the On-Line Application Form for Project Pre-Project Pre-Proposals

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

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

Brief 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: Check if the project is implementation and/or planning.

Two Types of Projects Eligible for Funding

1. **Implementation:** Examples include species monitoring; habitat evaluation; monitoring to assess effectiveness of conservation activities; research; and constructing systems to record, store, or disseminate information.

2. **Planning** - Three types:

1. Update, modify or revise the Plan including writing, printing, production, on-line production of the Plan.
2. Public Opinion gathering- i.e., surveys, polling, public meetings, focus groups & other methodologies to update, modify or revise the Plan.
3. Bring State and other conservation partners together to update, modify or revise the Plan.

Non-federal Match Requirements

Implementation projects require a **50% non-federal match** while *certain types* of **Planning projects** require 25% non-federal match.

- 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 federal 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.

Evaluation of this section 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**)

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. Explain how the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan addresses this need that you have identified as the basis for your project. (3000 characters)

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**)

Relationship to Plan: Applicants must, when submitting a SWG grant application, clearly indicate how the proposed grant objectives address one or more of the conservation needs identified within the Action Plan. (3000 characters) (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). (3000 characters)

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://dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildliferesources/theplan/species.htm> for a list of the species).

(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. (3000 characters)

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: 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. (3000 characters)

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**)