

**Land, Water & Wildlife Program**  
**Considerations for Initiating Projects**  
*Board of County Commissioners approved March 3, 2015*

**Issue:** It is now known that important conservation opportunities exist which are outside the missions, goals and priorities of existing conservation organizations and governmental entities.

So that such opportunities are not missed, in late 2012 County Commissioners and Land Use Director Tom Bergin encouraged the LAB to contemplate additional conservation project activities.

**Recommendation:** The LAB recommends that the Land, Water and Wildlife Program (LWWP) “initiate projects” or take “proactive involvement” as those terms are described in #5 through #7 under Conservation Continuum below.

A Conservation Continuum exists from:

- (1) General outreach
- (2) An applicant bringing a well-developed project to the LWWP for consideration (which we influence)
- (3) Outreach by LWWP which catalyses an application
- (4) Providing technical advice to the applicant, e.g., if they bring a not fully developed project to LWWP for consideration and are open to or request assistance. E.g., we can provide alternative approaches and possible solutions.

Project Initiation, Proactive Involvement:

- (5) Coordinating or facilitating projects when we may either lead or orchestrate the project (E.g., multi-party projects)
- (6) Serving as the applicant landowner’s Partner
- (7) Project initiation and development (acquisition or non-acquisition of a real property interest of land or water)

The LAB will evaluate whether to initiate a project. The recommended criteria begin on Page 2, categorized according to: (1) Conservation Values and LWWP criteria, (2) Diversity of the project, (3) Availability of others to do the project, (4) Expertise required and LWWP role, and (5) Costs and finances.

**Summary:** Projects for which the LWWP might take a pro-active approach must meet the goals, established criteria, application requirements, and other guidelines of BCC Resolution 2008-71 that authorized the Program. The LWWP may take initiative after considering the following factors, or when any or all of the circumstances exist as delineated in “Initiating Projects – Criteria”. All else being equal, the LAB continues to favor the LWWP responding to applicants and granting partial funding for projects brought forward by others, before pursuing our own initiatives.

## Considerations for Initiating Projects - Criteria

### OVERVIEW:

- I. LAB decides whether to get pro-actively involved.
  - a. LAB members, County staff, or elected officials may bring project ideas to the Program Coordinator (PC) who does an initial evaluation.
  - b. PC reviews the initial evaluation with the LAB Policy Subcommittee, which decides whether the project warrants consideration by the LAB, and if Yes, places it on the Agenda for a meeting of the full LAB.
  - c. LAB evaluates the proposed project according to the criteria below.
  - d. LWWP decides whether to work on the project. If “Yes,” the LAB appoints a Project Subcommittee. Selection criteria include expertise relevant to and needed for the project, passion for the project, and lack of conflicts of interest.
  - e. LAB provides guidance to the Subcommittee.
- II. Subcommittee works on the project.
- III. Pre-Application consideration.

### I. LAB DECIDES WHETHER TO GET PRO-ACTIVELY INVOLVED. (Threshold Questions)

**1. CONSERVATION VALUES AND LWWP CRITERIA.** *Does the project appear to meet the criteria of LWWP? If Yes, how? If No, why not? Can possible path(s) be seen or identified that may lead to meeting all the criteria?*

#### Criteria:

- a. What are the conservation values and public benefits?
- b. Does the project meet the goals of Resolution 2008-71?
- c. How do the conservation values and public benefits compare to existing or potential opportunities? (exceptional, stronger, about the same, less strong)
- d. Six Minimum Requirements to make the project eligible for LWWP funding must be met by the Full Application state (from the Program Guide, page 4 middle, and listed in the Project Evaluation Criteria, page 1 top).
  - i. Is the project located in Blaine County?
  - ii. Does the project serve at least one of the three primary levy purposes by protecting land, water or wildlife?
  - iii. If this is an acquisition, is there a willing seller? For all other projects, has the landowner committed their property for the project?
  - iv. Is there a qualified entity willing and able to hold and maintain the land interest to be conveyed? If a non-acquisition project, is there a qualified entity willing to take responsibility for the completion, maintenance and enforcement of the project?
  - v. Have matching funds or other leverage for the LWWP’s funding been sought? (Matching funds may be required).
  - vi. Will the project have lasting conservation outcomes?
- e. Would the project complete the conservation of a highly important resource or a significant portion of it? If Yes, how?

**2. DIVERSITY OF THE PROJECT.** *Will the project add diversity to LWWP outcomes?*

Criteria:

- a. Conservation values
- b. Geographic location
- c. Community served: population segments, user groups
- d. Type of entity(ies) the County might partner with
- e. Name of entity(ies) the County might partner with

**3. AVAILABILITY OF OTHERS TO DO THE PROJECT.** *The LWWP will only take initiative where, to its knowledge, other entities are not actively pursuing the project.*

Criteria:

- a. Is there any other entity of which we are aware that is pursuing this project? Actively, not actively, or previously? *If actively, project will not be brought to LAB.*
- b. Where does the project fit on the other entity's priority list? (high, med, low)
- c. What is the experience level of the other entity with this type of project? (high, med, low)?
- d. Is there an entity that LWWP believes has the capability to do the project, and if so, who (think local, statewide and nationally; nonprofit or government)? If Yes, the LAB will encourage that entity to pursue the project unless engaging in such communications might decrease the chances of the project's success.

**4. EXPERTISE REQUIRED AND LWWP ROLE.** *The scope, scale and nature of LWWP's involvement must be clear.*

Criteria:

- a. What expertise is needed for the project to succeed?
- b. What expertise does LWWP have in-house? If additional expertise is needed, can it be accessed on a timely basis (outside experts, volunteer or paid)?
- c. What role will LWWP play? Why?
- d. What role(s) should LWWP NOT play? Why?
- e. What is LWWP's unique value-added?
- f. What other individuals or organizations are, can or might be encouraged to fulfill the other role(s) necessary for success? Who are the "logical" ones?
- g. Who else within the County should be consulted on this matter?
- h. Is the County the best choice?

**5. COSTS AND FINANCES.** *Is the project a wise investment for LWWP?*

Criteria:

- a. What is the estimated total project cost? Higher, lower, or about the same as other projects?
- b. What are the estimated financial costs to LWWP? Consider LAB, staff/contractors, legal counsel, elected officials (high, med, low relative to other projects).
- c. What is the financial leverage of LWWP funds? Is it within % range of other projects? If a higher % of project funds will be required from LWWP – which could often be the case -- should the project still be considered?

- d. What other funding sources have been identified or have already committed funds? What is the fundraising strategy? What, or how much effort, will be required by LWWP to secure funding?
- e. How does it appear the importance of the conservation values compare to the financial costs involved? This question should be re-visited at key decision and go/no go points. *Note:* It is important to monitor project costs and to understand that costs are not always easy to estimate. Costs may change once a project is underway due to new information or unforeseen circumstances which virtually always occur and which must be solved to complete the project.
- f. Opportunity costs, focusing on conservation values, financial, and time. The LWWP will determine on a case-by-case basis where a project fits in priority relative to applications received and initiative we might take:
  - i. What is the opportunity cost of working on the proposed project? What other projects may be delayed or made impossible? What are the implications?
  - ii. What is the opportunity cost of NOT working on the project? What other projects may be delayed or made impossible? What are the implications?

## **II. SUBCOMMITTEE WORKS ON THE PROJECT**

- 1. The Subcommittee:
  - a. Pursues the project in keeping with guidance from the LAB
  - b. Further develops strategy and guidelines that the Program Coordinator implements
  - c. Reports back to the LAB at key decision and go/no go points that will be agreed upon for each project.
- 2. If or when the project reaches the stage where a Pre-Application is warranted, the LAB will determine if it and/or another entity should prepare it.

## **III. PRE-APPLICATION CONSIDERATION**

- 1. If the LAB is the applicant, the BCC will consider the Pre-Application.