## PROCESS

The 2014 MNRTF Program Review Subcommittee consists of Trust Fund Board Members Keith Charters and Erin McDonough. Subject matter expertise is being provided by DNR Grants Management Staff: Steve DeBrabander, Jon Mayes, Tamara Jorkasky and Amy Matisoff. Several times in the past three months the group met with stakeholders who have interest in the MNRTF mission.

An initial planning meeting was held in April followed by 3 meetings with representatives from regional planning organizations, land conservancies, Michigan Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA - a recreation advocacy group), and divisions of the MDNR. In these meetings there was a brief overview of statewide strategic plans, discussion of current board priorities and other priorities that should be considered by the subcommittee. The list of "other" priorities was added to and presented at each meeting.

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| 6-23-14 | Donna Stine, DNR Policy Advisor; MRPA, DNR Wildlife, DNR Forestry, DNR Parks and Recreation |
| 6-23-14 | Donna Stine, MEDC, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Southeast Regional Planning Commission, South West Michigan Planning Commission, West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, Little Traverse Land Conservancy. |
| 7-22-14 | Donna Stine, Eastern UP Regional Planning & Development Commission, DNR Fisheries, DNR Forestry, DNR Wildlife, DNR Parks and Recreation, Six Rivers Land Conservancy. |

Grants Management staff evaluated the input from the 3 meetings, compared them to the existing scoring system (2014) and considered what modifications might be beneficial for the 2015 grant cycle. It was determined that some evaluation criteria may need further research before they can be implemented with a scoring gradient.

This summary includes proposed changes, how the input is addressed in the current criteria and other discussion points.

## PROPOSED CHANGES

**Maintenance Plans** - Require maintenance plans with applications. This will not affect scoring.

- Development Applications: Require a maintenance plan that outlines in general terms the annual tasks and costs of maintenance of a project within the lifecycle of the scope items. Require applicants to address how they would handle invasive species.
- Acquisition Applications: In addition to a conceptual site plan, require that the applicant provided a simple management plan including how they will address invasive species.
- Demonstrate the ability to fund maintenance such as a millage, annual budget, etc.

**ADDRESSED IN CURRENT SCORING**

## Collaboration

Discussion Points:

- Collaboration in planning – We currently evaluate collaboration based on formal or informal agreements for operation and maintenance *(Section 2 Collaboration).* See the "Other Discussion Points" regarding regional planning priorities.
- Ability to Leverage – We currently provide more points for an applicant that can provide a higher percentage of match compared to their Median Household Income *(Section 9 Applicant Match)*.

## Connectivity

Discussion Points:

- Connectivity of the System – We currently evaluate connectivity in several areas of scoring.
    - Transportation and ability to locate the park *(Section 3 Site and Project Quality).*
    - Trail projects with regional connections score more points, versus single jurisdictional trails and trails within parks which receive fewer or no points *(Board Trail Priority)*.
    - An acquisition property identified in a Green Infrastructure Plan *(Acquisition Application, Section 3 Site and Project Quality)*.
    - Wildlife/Ecological Corridors that connect at least two existing protected properties *(Acquisition Application, Wildlife/Ecological Corridors and Natural Areas Buffer Board Priority)*.

## Natural Resources – Acquisition of Land for Long Term Sustainability

Discussion Points:

- We currently evaluate natural resources in several areas of scoring.
    - Development projects that provide a natural resource based opportunity with more points to higher quality resource or rare/non-existent opportunity in their service area *(Development - Section 6 Natural Resources Based Recreation Opportunities)*.
    - Acquisition projects that will protect imperiled or highly desired natural resources receive high points *(Acquisition - Section 6 Natural Resources Based Recreation Opportunities)*.
    - An acquisition property identified in a Green Infrastructure Plan receives points *(Acquisition Application, Section 3 Site and Project Quality)*.
    - Acquisition of property that either acts as or is adjacent to a DNR-identified winter deeryard *(Acquisition Application, Wildlife/Ecological Corridors and Natural Areas Buffer Board Priority)*.
    - Wildlife/Ecological Corridors that connect at least two existing protected properties *(Acquisition Application, Wildlife/Ecological Corridors and Natural Areas Buffer Board Priority)*.

## Trails

Maintain existing Trail priority for Development and Acquisition.

## Urban Areas

Maintain existing points for urban areas.

Discussion Points:

- There was some discussion of eliminating urban points in favor of regional priorities. As we feel that the regional priorities scoring needs additional consideration we did not eliminate this scoring criteria.
- Currently an applicant in an urban core can receive up to 90 points just for being in an urban area. (up to 50 pts from Board Priority and max of 40 pts from Section 8 Urban Areas.)

**OTHER DISCUSSION POINTS**

## Regional Impact

- There was a lot of discussion on funding projects that have a regional impact. We felt that as this is a new initiative we do not have enough information at this time to create criteria to score projects. So we are suggesting providing notes to the Board with the final scores indicating which applications are considered to have regional impact. After a year of evaluating applications with a more focused eye toward regionalism we may have a better idea how to address it. A couple of items we may look at are as follows:
    - Regional Attraction: Sufficient information can be provided to demonstrate that the project is/will be a regional attraction.
    - Iconic Landscape: The project will improve/acquire an existing iconic landscape that will promote the regional brand.
    - MiPlace Prosperity Region Priority: Project is identified in a MiPlace Plan and endorsed by a regional planning organization.

## Strategic Land Use Plan

- There was a lot of discussion on funding projects that are included in a strategic land use plan. We could not determine criteria that would demonstrate true strategic projects except for projects that are within the State strategic plans. So we are suggesting providing notes to the Board with the final scores. After a year of evaluating applications in this way, we may have a better idea how to address them. It was also discussed that a gap analysis of public recreation facilities needs to be completed in order to effectively implement the State strategic plans. A couple of items we may look at are as follows:
    - The project meets the goals and objectives of a strategic regional or State land use plan.
    - The project overlaps with the objectives in multiple strategic land use plans.

## Identifying Projects for Board Attention

In addition to identifying projects that have a regional impact or are within a strategic land use plan, the GMS staff may also note projects for the board's attention as follows:

- Small development or acquisition projects that are a high priority for an area, but may not have scored very well.
- Projects that do not score high, but were able to provide a high percentage of match or offer other noteworthy benefit not reflected in score.
- Projects that are unique or innovative.

## Economic Impact

There was a lengthy discussion of how to assess the economic impact of a recreation project, but it was determined that there is not a readily available assessment tool for communities and there may be a disadvantage for communities who do not have the funds or resources to complete this assessment.

## Priority Projects

Focusing the bulk (or all) of Trust Fund dollars available in a particular year or years on a priority project, such as developing the Governor's Showcase Trail or providing access on the Great Lakes every 5 miles was discussed at several input meetings. It was determined that additional deliberation would be needed in order to determine if the benefits of such an approach would exceed the drawbacks. (For example, such a strategy could mean that a fair number of communities badly in need of park restroom upgrades would go without funding as a result of the focus project monopolizing funding.)