



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

State Trails Program
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2022 Non-Motorized Trail Grant Pilot Categories as recommended by the State Recreational Trails Committee

This letter is a summary and explanation of the pilot of the 2021 Non-Motorized Trail Grant Categories and a request to continue the pilot for the 2022 grant cycle.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Since its establishment in 1971, the CPW State Trails Program has administered grants for trail-related projects to local, county, and state governments, federal agencies, special recreation districts, and non-profit organizations with management responsibilities over public lands. This statewide program is supported by the State Trails Committee (the Committee) who serves as an advisory body to the Parks and Wildlife Commission (the Commission) and CPW staff on all matters pertaining to trails, their use, extent, location and funding. The Committee also makes recommendations to the Commission concerning State Trails Program grant funding and processes (A-104, I) including the annual non-motorized trail grant program. Local, county, and state governments, federal agencies, special recreation districts, and non-profit organizations with management responsibilities over public lands may apply for and are eligible to receive non-motorized and motorized trail grants.

Per Parks and Wildlife Commission Policy A-104, there are three standing grant review and ranking subcommittees that are appointed for the purpose of ranking non-motorized grant applications and formulating specific grant funding recommendations to the Committee (A104, VI, A). The three standing non-motorized trail grant subcommittees are:

- Large Construction/Maintenance Recreational Trail Grant Subcommittee
- Small Construction/Maintenance Recreational Trail Grant Subcommittee
- Recreational Trail Planning & Support Grant Subcommittee

To continue the State Trails Program's goal to improve trail recreation opportunities while protecting wildlife, habitat, and cultural resources, the program implemented several changes to the 2020 and 2021 Non-Motorized Trail Grant cycles.

- Scoring criteria were updated to ensure reviewers were properly considering wildlife impacts.
- Several questions were added to the application focused on how potential impacts would be avoided or minimized.
- Applicants were asked to share maps of existing trails to help staff and grant reviewers consider potential impacts on a landscape level.
- Regional Wildlife Impact Memos were also shared publicly and applicants were asked to address any comments related to their projects during their grant presentation to the subcommittee.



To help with the larger goal of how to address and prioritize the state's need for maintenance and management of existing trail systems with the need for new trail construction, the State Program implemented a pilot to the following grant categories:

- Construction
- Maintenance
- Planning & Support

The Committee requested that an emphasis be placed on maintenance projects for the 2021 Non-Motorized Grant Cycle to address the increased need to repair and improve existing trails in Colorado due to the increased use during the pandemic.

This year's cycle saw a drastic increase in non-motorized applications and total grant award requests due to the higher demand for recreation and budget impacts during the pandemic (26 applications for a request of \$4,368,815 during the 2020 cycle to 52 applications for a request of \$8,008,697 during the 2021 cycle). On March 17, 2021, the Commission approved 20 grants for a total award amount of \$3,520,752. This included 9 maintenance grants for \$1,009,228 to fund non-motorized maintenance crews and projects across the state. This was a 68% funding increase to the maintenance category from the initial pilot year.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY:

Given the large difference in the application numbers during the two years of this pilot, the Committee recommended that the pilot continue for a third year to better evaluate the effectiveness of this approach. Based on feedback from the Non-Motorized Subcommittee members, the Committee felt the second year of the pilot was successful as it allowed them to both better differentiate between types of trail projects and have a more direct comparison of applications. The Committee feels another year of evaluation is necessary to ensure we are responding to the state's recreation and resource needs. The Committee believes another pilot year will help us make sure these new categories still meet applicant needs after the increased trail use and budget issues seen over the past year, as well as affirm that smaller dollar grant amounts will be competitive in this structure.

DIVISION RECOMMENDATION:

The State Recreational Trails Committee and the State Trails Program have provided the Commission with information for consideration and approval to continue the pilot program for the 2022 Non-Motorized Grant Categories to include Construction, Maintenance, and Planning. After the pilot program runs for another grant cycle, the Commission will be updated on the effectiveness of the process, including a recommendation from the Committee and State Trails Program regarding whether policy A-104 should be updated to the pilot program subcommittee categories.

If you have any questions on this information, or anything else related to the trails program, feel free to give me a call prior to the Commission meeting. Thank you.