

# MACRO to MICRO Public Funding Stream for Trails and Equestrian Groups

## MACRO INFORMATION

**Federal Budget** = taxes + tariffs + leases + fines + fines + other categories

BUT

Continuing Resolution (CR) is the lack of a Federal Budget developed and approved by Congress since 2010. In absence of a Federal Budget, all federal agencies operate on their budget total from the previous year.

Sequestration is the directive from Congress for every federal agency to cut its budget 5% across the board.

CR (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) + Sequestration = a Federal Budget strength going into 2014 ≈ the 2006/2007 Federal Budget (≈20% less strength). For example the 2006 U.S. population was ≈ 290M, the 2013 U.S. population was ≈ 315M (≈10% growth).

The Federal Budget funds various Departments including the Department of the Interior (DOI) which includes, among other agencies, the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and Department of Agriculture (D.Ag.) which funds, among other agencies, the US Forest Service – these are the primary federal agencies related to trails and each agency has a specific mission for resource management.

Each Agency Budget can be used for: Administration, Mission Specific Obligations, Operations, Maintenance, Education and Discretionary Programs related to mission.

Supplemental Funding sources for some recreation and trails include: the Farm Bill (D.Ag.); Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) (DOI), Fee Demo Funds (NPS and USFS), grant programs, other.

LWCF was created by Congress in 1965 as an annual \$900 M funding source for recreation funding derived from royalties from off-shore oil and gas drilling (non-renewable public resources sold for commercial gain). This is the only dedicated source of federal money for recreation. The funds cannot be used for operations or maintenance (that comes out of the Agency budget), or for planning. For over 20 years the \$900M has been under-appropriated by almost 50%.

The LWCF that are appropriated are divided in half: 50% goes to federal agencies and 50% is divided among the states for their State Parks Department to administer. Federal agencies can use their funds for acquisition of identified critical areas, special programs and special projects. Every five years, every state must conduct a “State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan” (SCORP) that defines, among other things, how their portion of the LWCF will be channeled through grant programs (but not for maintenance), and environmental education programs. (See attached document about the Land and Water Conservation Coalition and website. They are an oversight nonprofit to track the LWCF.)

State Trails Funding is derived from allocations from the State Budget, LWCF, discretionary money (lotteries, etc.) and a few other possible sources. In 2002, Arizona voters supported a ballot initiative (the Heritage Fund) to apportion some of the state lottery dollars (up to \$5M per year) to Arizona State Parks for community recreation grant programs. In 2010, with the state budget deficit pressure, the AZ State Legislature voted to sweep the Heritage Fund money to help balance the state budget thereby impacting funding for community and outdoor recreation, including trails. In 2013 there is talk that the Heritage Funds may be reinstated for use by

AZ State Parks. This is one story in one state about the vagaries and vulnerabilities of public funding for trails and outdoor recreation.

### **Bottom Line Of The Bottom Line**

- Understand and Track Funds and Budgets (get involved with oversight groups)
- Clarify Your Organization's Annual Goals
- Communicate with Elected Officials About Your Groups' Values, Needs and Interests
- Demonstrate Your Groups' Message and Magnitude of Your Membership

### **MICRO INFORMATION (closer to home)**

#### **Working Locally With Agencies**

- All agencies manage public resources guided by their current Resource Management Plan (RMP), or General Management Plan, or Comprehensive Plan or General Plan, it depends on the jurisdiction. Either way, all plans have been vetted through a public process, and have been approved by the highest management level. And the plans usually have a shelf life of 15 to 20 years with several different resource components within. Many federal agency plans have recently or will soon be revised.
- Get to know the trails staff and their supervisors. (Please keep in mind that with reduction of government trends over the last 5 to 15 years, many staff are doing at least 2 jobs, if not more now.)
- Get to know what is/are the goals for the agencies annual work plan related to the RMP
- Discuss and know the annual goals of your Organization and make them known to the agency staff you work with and their supervisor.
- Participate in the RMP update process, when there is an opportunity. It can be pretty time consuming, but it's a way to make your voice, values, needs and issues heard.
- Be part of the solution. Public land management is very complicated with competing and often conflicting interests. Help figure things out.
- Keep elected officials and their aides informed (government staff cannot do this, it is not allowed.)
- Try to understand the cultural, historic, environmental compliance requirements and process. It can be a long and expensive process that takes patience to protect important resources.
- Consider the "Multiple Use" mandate of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). It basically implies do no harm by allowing all uses within reason while protecting all important resources.
- Empathize with staff – they did not write the rules and laws they administer.
- Be patient – good stewardship is deliberate and takes time.
- Think outside the box. The challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are much different from when the public land agencies were established.

#### **Working Within Your Own Group**

- Step up and be a leader
- Mentor others to be leaders
- Be clear about your organization's mission and goals
- Take the time to do an Annual Plan, then work you plan
- Encourage volunteerism with the public land managers – we all want the same thing, to enjoy the outdoors
- Work with other community organizations as neighbors and land stewards
- Have fun and show others what fun it is to be outdoors

## **What is the Land & Water Conservation Fund?**

Created by Congress in 1965, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was a bipartisan commitment to safeguard natural areas, water resources and our cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. National parks like Rocky Mountain, the Grand Canyon, and the Great Smoky Mountains, as well as national wildlife refuges, national forests, rivers and lakes, community parks, trails, and ball fields in every one of our 50 states were set aside for Americans to enjoy thanks to federal funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

It was a simple idea: use revenues from the depletion of one natural resource - offshore oil and gas - to support the conservation of another precious resource - our land and water. Every year, \$900 million in royalties paid by energy companies drilling for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) are put into this fund. The money is intended to create and protect national parks, areas around rivers and lakes, national forests, and national wildlife refuges from development, and to provide matching grants for state and local parks and recreation projects.

Yet, nearly every year, Congress breaks its own promise to the American people and diverts much of this funding to uses other than conserving our most important lands and waters.

As a result, there is a substantial backlog of federal land acquisition needs estimated at more than \$30 billion—including places vulnerable to development such as the Florida Everglades, Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona, Civil War battlefields in Virginia and other precious places around the country. State governments also report needing \$27 billion in LWCF funds for eligible local parks and recreation projects.

## **From Large Landscapes to Your Local Community Park**

### ***Federal Land Protection Program***

The LWCF program has permanently protected nearly five million acres of public lands including some of America's most treasured assets such as Grand Canyon National Park, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, the White Mountain National Forest, and Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, the nation's first federal refuge.

Over the duration of the program, funding for LWCF has varied yearly, falling drastically in the last few years to total less than \$100 million in 2007.

Today, the four federal land management agencies (National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management) estimate the accumulated backlog of deferred federal acquisition needs to be around \$30 billion. Opportunities to protect fish and wildlife habitat, provide public access for recreation, preserve our nation's most notable historic and cultural sites, and protect scenic vistas are being lost every day to development.

### ***State Assistance Program***

The LWCF state assistance program provides matching grants to help states and local communities protect parks and recreation resources. Running the gamut from wilderness to trails and neighborhood playgrounds, LWCF funding has benefited nearly every county in America, supporting over 41,000 projects. This 50:50 matching program is the primary federal investment tool to ensure that families have easy access to parks and open space, hiking and riding trails, and neighborhood recreation facilities.

Over the life of the program, more than \$3 billion in LWCF grants to states has leveraged more than \$7 billion in nonfederal matching funds. But funding levels have been unpredictable and the average annual appropriation since fiscal year 1987 is a mere \$40 million—despite the need for millions more.

Today, the National Park Service reports that the unmet need for outdoor recreation facilities and parkland acquisition at the state level is \$27 billion. While the LWCF alone cannot address all state park needs, it is a critical federal partnership with our nation's state and local parks and communities.

*From the Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition website [www.lwcfcoalition.org](http://www.lwcfcoalition.org)*