

**Recommendation for Interim Project Approval Guidelines For
State Wildlife Grants (SWG), Landowner Incentives Program
(LIP), and Section 6 (T&E) Projects**

Introduction:

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission began receiving State Wildlife Grants (SWG) funding in October 2001. Since then the Commission has received the following SWG grants:

<u>Federal FY</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Obligated</u>
2001	\$565,290	\$565,290
2002	\$906,455	\$906,455
2003	\$679,841	\$618,588
2004	<u>\$718,409</u>	<u>\$0</u>
	\$2,869,995	\$2,090,333

SWG is relatively new federal cost-share funding to states for wildlife species identified as having the greatest conservation needs within the state. These funds have been appropriated by Congress to develop and implement programs for the benefit of these species and their habitat (see Appendix A).

Additionally the Commission annually receives funding for endangered species through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (Section 6) and the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP). These grants provide federal cost-share funding for endangered species (Section 6) and species at risk on private land (LIP). Funding for these projects during the same time period listed above for SWG were:

<u>Federal FY</u>	<u>Section 6</u>	<u>Obligated</u>	<u>LIP</u>	<u>Obligated</u>
2001	\$90,494	\$90,494	\$0	\$0
2002	\$69,474	\$69,474	\$0	\$0
2003	<u>\$88,087</u>	<u>\$88,087</u>	<u>\$152,512</u>	<u>\$152,512</u>
	\$248,055	\$248,055	\$152,512	\$152,512

Current Situation:

- The States must develop a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) by October 2005 to continue receiving and prevent reversion of State Wildlife Grants and Wildlife Conservation and Restoration funds.
- SWG, LIP and Section 6 funds are currently being applied to objectives and strategies identified in various species plans by the Divisions through the approved Commission budget process.

- Proposals that may or may not address AGFC species plan objectives are beginning to come in from partners.
- A grants management group comprised of Steve Filipek, Mark Clark and Kris Rutherford was designated by the senior management team to guide SWG grant approval when SWG funding first started.
- The assignment to develop the CWCS became the responsibility of a larger steering team that is composed of John Sunderland, Steve Filipek, Lucy Moreland, Kris Rutherford, Doyle Shook, Bill Holimon (ANHC), Rob Fisher (Arkansas Audubon), Mike Fuhr (The Nature Conservancy) and Allan Meuller (USFWS)
- The Commission's inter-disciplinary Research Coordination Committee (RCC) was created at the request of the Commission to identify, prioritize, and oversee all agency research needs and functions (see Appendix B). The Commission specifically wanted outsourced research to be let on competitive bid. The committee was comprised of 3 Fisheries representatives, 3 WMD representatives, two Enforcement representatives, and one Communications representative. Many of the SWG projects include research that would fall under the purview of the RCC. The RCC is no longer a functional committee.
- A \$600k broad-scope planning grant has been approved by the USFWS from the FY2003 SWG appropriation that will support plan development while at the same time supporting much of the planned species work, especially that which develops information required by the CWCS. Upon completion of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) in 2005 an implementation team comprised of partner agencies and NGOs will guide State Wildlife Grants funding priorities using CWCS objectives and strategies.

An interim mechanism is needed to guide project submittal and approve projects for SWG, LIP, and Section 6 funds that complies with the Commission's budgetary procedures and ensures successful completion of the CWCP.

Recommendations for Interim Project Approval

A. It is recommended that the State Wildlife Grants – CWCS Steering Committee be granted authority to prioritize and approve projects for SWG, LIP, and Section 6 funding until the CWCS is completed and an interagency implementation committee is designated. Budget proposals and management would comply with current Commission procedure (Appendix C). Budgets for all SWG, LIP and Section 6 projects would be funded from Cost Center 140125 (Comprehensive Planning (SWG)).

The CWCS Steering Committee would operate under the following guidelines for project proposal ranking:

1. Until the CWCS is completed project proposals with a term of more than three years will be discouraged.
2. Projects currently underway (Feb 04) and will be funded to completion.
3. Priority for SWG 03 and SWG 04 funding will be plan infrastructure (data acquisition and management, GIS, website development) and projects that respond directly to CWCS development needs as defined in the eight required elements (Appendix D). Both internal and external proposals will be considered. Match is 72/25 cash or in-kind.
4. Other new proposals will be ranked according to the following priorities:

Priority 1 Implementation projects that respond directly to objectives and strategies in AGFC species plans. Both internal and external proposals will be considered. Match is 50/50 cash or in-kind.

Priority 2 Implementation projects that address species of greatest conservation need not yet included in an AGFC species plan. Both internal and external proposals will be considered. Match is 50/50 cash or in-kind.

New Proposals Pending:

Ouachita/Ozark NF Species Viability Assessment
Natural Heritage Data Manager
Effects of the introduced crayfish *Orconectes neglectus*
Tower Bird Mortality Study
Hellbender Monitoring
Arkansas eBird Website (Audubon – pre-proposal)
Spotted Skunk Distribution

- B. It is recommended that the CWCS Steering Committee function as the interim Research Coordination Committee.

Request for Proposals

Arkansas Game & Fish Commission

2 Natural Resources Drive

Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

PROPOSAL NAME:

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

OBJECTIVE(S):

SCOPE OF WORK (POSSIBLE LOCATION, SCOPE OF PROBLEMS)

EXPECTED RESULTS/USE OF RESULTS TO BETTER MANAGEMENT,
CULTURE, ETC.:

CONTACT PERSON: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

DIVISION CHIEF APPROVAL: _____

Research Coordinating Committee Proposal Scoring Sheet

Initial Screen-out:

1. Was proposal in proper format: YES NO

Proposal Rating:

Assign a raw score of 1-10 for each of the 4 criteria.

7-10 Well developed to Exceptionally well developed

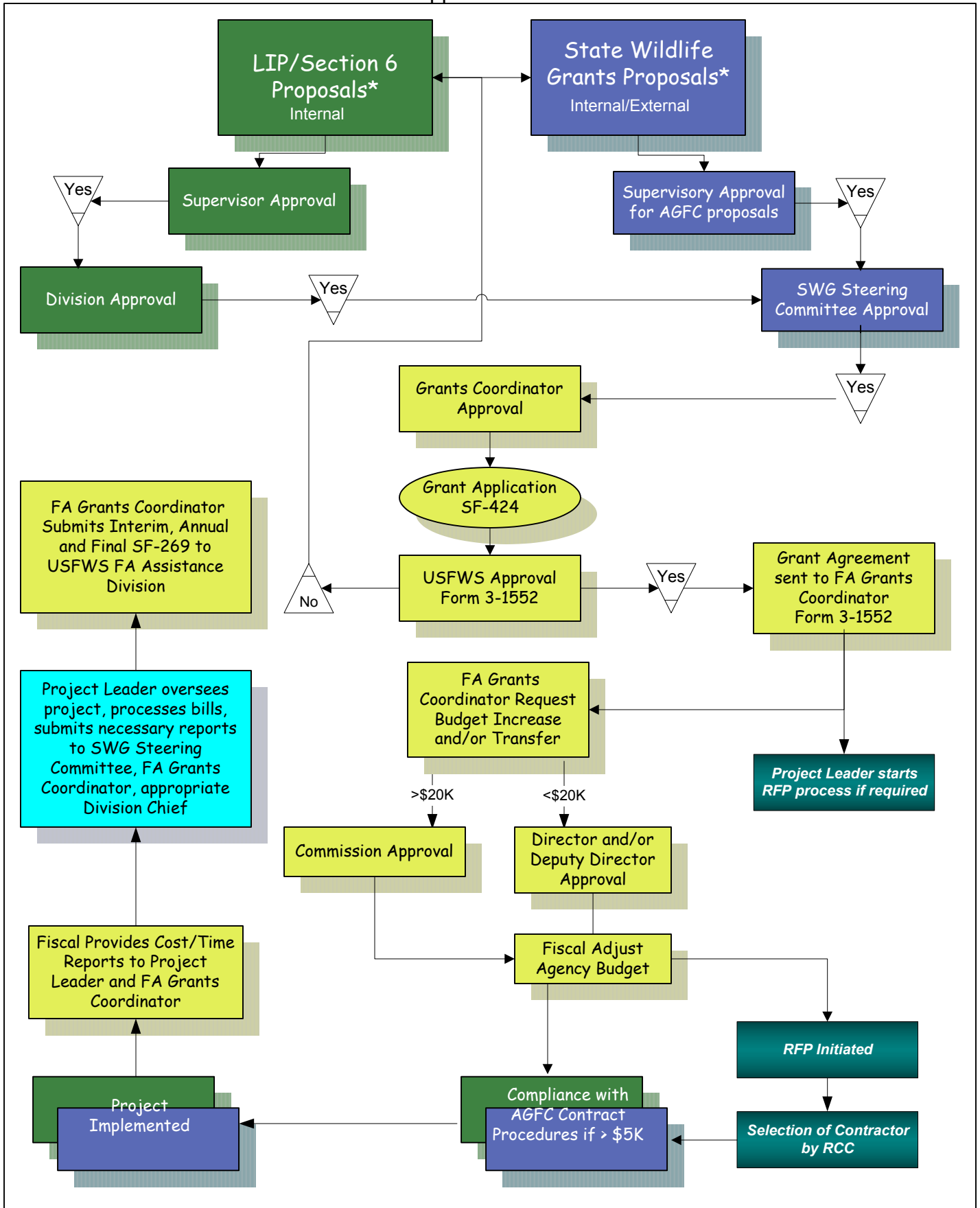
4-6 Fair to adequately developed

1-4 Undeveloped to Poorly Developed

Criteria	Raw Score	Weighting Factor	Sub-Total
1. Potential Benefit to Resource Management - does proposal RFP objectives - will project result in tangible management deliverables		X 0.25	0.00
2. Technical Merit - appropriateness of methodology - efficient use of equipment and labor resources		X 0.25	0.00
3. Qualifications of Principle Investigator(s) - productivity - relevant experience - ability to complete		X 0.25	0.00
4. Cost Relative to Benefits - is it worth it?		X 0.25	0.00
TOTAL SCORE			0.00

Comments of the Reviewer:

Appendix C Grants Approval Process



* Project Leader Need Objective Expected Results Approach Location Cost

+ Federal Aid Assurance and Compliance Documents