



# United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service  
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Washington, DC 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L2225

April 10, 2020

## MEMORANDUM

To: Land and Water Conservation Fund State Liaison Officers

From: Joel Lynch \\signed\\  
Chief, State and Local Assistance Programs Division

Subject: FY2020 Apportionment and Latest Grant Cycle Update

The purpose of this memorandum is to update our LWCF Partners with regards to a number of ongoing changes since my March 17, 2020 memo, as well as provide a copy of the FY2020 apportionment certificate. Please share this widely with your staff who administer the program. If you have questions, please reach out.

First, on behalf of the National Park Service and the State and Local Assistance (SLA) LWCF Team, I sincerely hope that you, your families, and your team and everyone's loved ones are healthy and shouldering this crisis in these odd and challenging times. Keep the faith that these challenges will be overcome.

One thing my team and I have found solace in during this unprecedented time is witnessing firsthand how our communities, in a perhaps different light than before, have come to embrace their parks and other public outdoor spaces as outlets for their mental and physical well-being. This has become particularly true as the crisis deepens and these very sanctuaries are being closed and access restricted. We should all take heart that our work is more important than ever, and with increasing funding level we have an opportunity to amplify the relevancy!

### **A. Program Operations**

As I am sure it is with just about everyone, since my last memo all NPS-SLA staff are now under a mandatory teleworking arrangement. Most of the NPS-SLA team has been doing this for a few weeks now so we're settled into our rhythms and routines. We are also preparing for the continuation of this new work paradigm for at least the next month and longer if necessary. I want to again reiterate and emphasize that despite the challenges with this new situation our goal is to continue to maintain our operations as normally as we can in our service to you all. So we are here to help figure out how best to continue our important work, especially with grants. As a reminder, in most cases it is easiest to reach out to your NPS contact via email.

## **B. FY2020 Apportionment**

Despite all that is going on, Secretary Bernhardt announced the apportionment of \$227.1 million for the State Assistance Program on March 31. The \$227.1 million apportionment represents a \$56.5 million dollar increase over last year's apportionment. In large part, this increase is due to the promise of the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) being almost fully realized. For the first time, revenues collected in FY 2019 met the authorized ceiling of \$125 million for state and local assistance, although the amount was reduced due to sequestration as mandated by the Budget Control Act of 2011. Congress also showed its continued support for our collective good work by increasing the appropriation from LWCF by \$10 million to a total of \$110 million.

Since we are restricted from going into our offices, we are working with the Director's Office staff to get the individual state apportionment letters to your governors. We do not have an exact timeframe for when that might occur, but it is a priority to get them out. So, in the interim, please refer to the attached apportionment certification signed by Secretary Bernhardt for your state's LWCF amounts for this year.

## **C. Grant System Transition and Final Project Application Submissions Cycles**

In a bit of positive news related to the pandemic, NPS's transition to the new electronic grant management system called GrantSolutions, which had just been pushed back to the end of July at the time of my last memo, has now been pushed back to mid-October. So we are now able to affirmatively settle the dates of the final grant cycle. With this good news, as well as having the FY2020 apportionment in hand to add to the remaining balances from 2018 and 2019, we have a total of approximately \$346.3 million to direct towards priority projects to benefit state and local parks. In our view, each of these grant projects has the potential to serve as a "stimulus" for our economy that has been so impacted by the response to Covid-19. To the extent possible, even under the constraints we are all facing, I hope we can tee up a number of projects early enough to be able to break ground once we are clear of this pandemic.

To this end, previously we had extended the length of the second cycle anticipating the third cycle would have to be even later and shorter than we had planned for due to the first announced delay of the GrantSolutions transition. Although that's now not the case, we imagine the extra time will instead be useful to account for the challenges we are all experiencing having to work outside of our normal environments. So, we don't plan to change the application due date for cycle 2. However, for cycle 3, we will reset the dates to be more typical for a third round; specifically, **June 1 to July 17**. This is an earlier but longer timeframe than the original planned window of July 1 to 31, which was set to work around the May/June blackout period and launch of GrantSolutions on July 1. Instead the blackout period will now likely start in mid-September, so moving the cycle back to more normal dates will also help us be ready for that deadline. We sincerely apologize for having to change the dates for the grant cycles this many times mid-stream, but the timing of this software transition has very literally been a moving target.

As of now, the grant cycles timeframes will be the following:

<b>Cycle</b>	<b>Open Date</b>	<b>Close Date</b>	<b>Award Start Date</b>
First - COMPLETED	December 5, 2019	January 17, 2020	March 1
Second - OPEN	March 4, 2020	April 30, 2020	June 1 to 15
Third	<b>June 1, 2020</b>	<b>July 17, 2020</b>	September 21

It remains critically important that drafts of your applications get submitted to your program officer in plenty of time for their review so that comments can be returned, and applications revised in time to meet the application due dates. Please observe any due dates provided by the regional offices, which may need to change from any dates provided previously.

#### **D. ORLP Update**

The further delayed launch of GrantSolutions now means there will not be an impact to the other currently open NOFO, for the 4th round of the ORLP. So, the application due date will remain July 10 as originally planned.

#### **E. Requirements and Process Adaptations**

We are starting to get inquiries related to the impacts of the pandemic on your operations and what administrative relief may be possible. In the last couple weeks we have received some and expect to get additional guidance from OMB, DOI, and the NPS about waivers and other flexibilities that can be offered for financial assistance programs impacted by the pandemic as they related to 2 CFR 200 requirements. For example, grants that expired December 31 and were in their close-out period and those that ended March 31 and are now in close-out are eligible to receive additional time for close-out activities if needed (for example, because final site inspections can't take place right now). Likewise, active grants that are due to expire between now and the end of the calendar year for which work has halted due to the pandemic may request up to 12 months extension. Other examples that may be relevant to you include extensions of current indirect rates (note these must be requested from the Interior Business Center or your cognizant federal agency), SAM renewals, A-123 audits, and similar.

In general, the parameters for these waivers are fairly specific/narrow and the authorization to allow for them is short term (currently lasts for only 90 days with re-evaluation sometime in May to assess whether there is continued need). If you are experiencing difficulties in implementing your program due to the pandemic please reach out to us or your program officer to see what might be possible, but keep in mind things are not set up to allow for any and all possible accommodation regardless of circumstance. OMB is also requiring grant programs to track all the exceptions provided, so please try to make such requests only when needed.

Once again, our best wishes to you all and please let us know if you have questions or concerns.