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The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) established cabinet-level status for Pennsylvania's state parks and forests and also places conservation and recreation programs dealing with local recreation, heritage parks, rivers conservation, greenways, trails, and open spaces under a single agency. A key priority of this agency is to bring its programs into towns and cities across Pennsylvania and to provide leadership linking agency resources with local conservation efforts.

The Community Conservation Partnerships Program initiative joins DCNR with communities, nonprofit groups and the private sector in conserving Pennsylvania's valuable natural and cultural heritage. DCNR partnerships involve greenways, open spaces, community parks, rail trails, river corridors, natural areas, indoor and outdoor recreation and environmental education. Agency programs will be linked with efforts to conserve natural and historic resources, provide recreation, enhance tourism, and foster community development.

DCNR Partnership Opportunities

DCNR provides a single point of contact for communities and nonprofit conservation agencies seeking state assistance in support of local conservation initiatives. This assistance can take the form of grants, technical assistance, information exchange and training. These programs are described below:

Heritage Parks Grants promote public-private partnerships to preserve and enhance natural, cultural, historic and recreation resources to stimulate economic development through heritage tourism. Grants are available to municipalities, nonprofit organizations or federally designated commissions acting on behalf of the municipalities in a heritage park area. Grants are awarded for a variety of purposes including feasibility studies; development of management action plans for heritage park areas; specialized studies; implementation projects; and hiring of state heritage park managers. Grants require a 25-50 percent local match.

Community Grants are awarded to municipalities for recreation, park and conservation projects. These include the rehabilitation and development of parks and recreation facilities; acquisition of land for park and conservation purposes; and technical assistance for feasibility studies, trails studies, and site development planning. Grants require a 50 percent match except for some technical assistance grants and projects eligible as small community projects. The small community development projects provide a municipal applicant with a population of 5000 or less with an alternate method of funding for rehabilitation and development of minor indoor and basic outdoor park, recreation and conservation areas and facilities. The initial \$20,000 or less in grant funding provided must be used to purchase materials only and approved professional design fees. Additional grant

funds of up to \$20,000 may be provided matching the municipal applicant's local cash or non-cash contribution to the project. The additional \$20,000 may be used to cover all other eligible costs and other costs such as labor and/or equipment. The maximum grant under this project type is \$40,000.

Land Trust Grants provide 50 percent funding for acquisition and planning of open space and natural areas which face imminent loss. Lands must be open to public use and priority is given to habitat for threatened species. Eligible applicants are nonprofit land trusts and conservancies.

River Conservation Grants are available to municipalities, counties, municipal and intermunicipal authorities, and river support groups to conserve and enhance river resources. River support groups must be nonprofits which are designated to act on behalf of interested municipalities. Planning grants are available to identify significant natural and cultural resources, threats, concerns and special opportunities and to develop river conservation plans. Implementation grants are available to carry out projects or activities defined in an approved river conservation plan. Grants require a 50 percent match.

Rails-to-Trails Grants provide 50 percent funding for the planning, acquisition or development of rail-trail corridors. Eligible applicants include municipalities and nonprofit organizations established to preserve and protect available abandoned railroad corridors for use as trails or future rail service.

Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Program Grants provide funds to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail related facilities for motorized and nonmotorized recreational trail use. Eligible applicants include federal and state agencies, local governments and private organizations. Match requirements for Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Program Grants are 80% grant money, up to a maximum of \$100,000, and 20% project applicant money. However, acquisition projects will require a 50/50 match. "Soft match" (credit for donations of funds, materials, services, or new right-of-way) is permitted from any project sponsor, whether a private organization or public agency. Eligible project categories include: maintenance and restoration of existing recreational trails; development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages; purchase and lease of recreational trail construction and maintenance equipment; construction of new recreational trails (with restrictions on new trails on Federal land); and, acquisition of easements or property for recreational trails or recreational trail corridors.

Funding for the Recreational Trails Program is provided to the Commonwealth through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21). DCNR anticipates receiving approximately \$1 million in federal funds for this grant round.

Special Projects

The Bureau plays a pivotal role in special projects like:

- The Governor's Conference on Greenways and Trails
- The State Recreation Planning Program
- The June Rivers Month Sojourn