

CHAPTER 23  
WILDLIFE HABITAT PROMOTION WITH LOCAL ENTITIES PROGRAM  
[Prior to 12/31/86, Conservation Commission[290]]

**571—23.1(483A) Purpose and definitions.** The purpose of this rule is to designate procedures for allotments of wildlife habitat stamp revenues to local entities. These funds must be used specifically for the acquisition of whole or partial interests in land from willing sellers for use as wildlife habitats, and the development and enhancement of wildlife lands and habitat areas. The department of natural resources will administer the stamp funds for the purposes as stated in the law at both the state and local levels. The following definitions apply in these rules:

“*Commission*” means the natural resource commission.

“*Department*” means the department of natural resources.

“*Director*” means the director of the department or a designee.

“*Waiver of retroactivity*” means approval by the department for an applicant to purchase land prior to the next round of wildlife habitat fund application reviews. The waiver allows the applicant to remain eligible for the next round of wildlife habitat funds when extenuating circumstances exist that require an immediate purchase of the subject property by the applicant or a third party that will hold the property until funds become available to the applicant.

[ARC 8885B, IAB 6/30/10, effective 8/18/10]

**571—23.2(483A) Availability of funds.** Habitat stamp funds are dependent on stamp sales. The amount of moneys available at any time will be determined by revenues received by the department. Final stamp sales for each calendar year will be determined by July 1 of the following year.

**23.2(1) Local share.** Funds available for local entities shall be specified in the department’s budget in accordance with legislative appropriations. At least 50 percent of the stamp revenues will be apportioned to local entities. Funds will be made available during a fiscal year of July 1 to June 30.

**23.2(2) Distribution.** After deducting 5 percent to be held for contingencies, the remaining local share will be available on a semiannual basis each year.

**571—23.3(483A) Eligibility.** Only those public agencies authorized by law to spend funds for wildlife habitat shall be eligible to participate in this program.

**571—23.4(483A) Project limitations.** Because of administrative costs, no application for assistance totaling less than \$3,000 (total project cost—\$4,000) will be considered.

**571—23.5(483A) Eligibility for cost-sharing assistance.** No project shall be eligible for cost sharing unless it is specifically approved by the commission, or the applicant has received a written waiver of retroactivity from the director, prior to its initiation. A project shall not be eligible for cost sharing unless public hunting and trapping will be allowed; however, the review and selection committee may recommend for commission approval projects with restrictions on hunting and trapping under exceptional circumstances, such as waterfowl refuges. Fees charged for recreational purposes will not be allowed on land purchased or developed with wildlife habitat funds. Wildlife habitat promotion funds shall not be used to fund mitigation lands or banks, or other lands, to satisfy mitigation requirements. Only the following types of project expenditures will be eligible for cost-sharing assistance.

**23.5(1) Acquisition projects.** Lands or rights thereto to be acquired in fee or by any other instrument shall be appraised by a competent appraiser and the appraisal approved by the department staff. Applicants whose applications have been approved for funding must submit an appraisal that meets the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions. The appraisal requirements may be waived when the staff determines that they are impractical for a specific project. Cost sharing will not be approved for more than 75 percent of the approved appraised value. Acquisition projects are eligible for either cost sharing by direct payments as described in subrule 23.12(7) or by reimbursement to local entities.

When a county receives or will receive financial income directly or indirectly from sources that would have been paid to the previous landowner as a result of a purchase agreement or other title transfer action, 75 percent of that income will be transferred to the department unless the grantee has demonstrated and committed to habitat development projects or additional acquisitions on the project site to be funded from the income received. The project review and selection committee must recommend, and the director and commission must approve, plans for the expenditure of income. In the absence of acceptable wildlife habitat development or acquisition plans, the county will transfer 75 percent of income received to the department as it is received. The department will credit that income to the county apportionment of the wildlife habitat stamp fund as described in subrule 23.2(1). The schedule of those reimbursements from a county to the state will be included in the project agreement.

**23.5(2) *Development projects.*** Eligible expenditures for development projects shall include seeding and planting of habitat to support or enhance the wildlife area. Requests to purchase equipment will not be approved. Donated labor, materials and equipment use, and force account labor and equipment use shall not be eligible for cost-sharing assistance. (Force account means the agency's own labor and equipment use.) Development projects are limited to lands legally controlled by the grantee for the expected life of the project. Development projects are eligible only for reimbursement of reasonable costs actually incurred and paid by the public agency.

**23.5(3) *Enhancement projects.*** For purposes of this rule, "enhancement" shall be considered to be synonymous with "development."

This rule is intended to implement the provisions of Iowa Code section 483A.3.  
[ARC 8885B, IAB 6/30/10, effective 8/18/10]

**571—23.6(483A) Application for assistance.** Applications shall provide sufficient detail as to clearly describe the scope of the project and how the area will be managed.

**23.6(1) *Form.*** Applications shall be submitted on forms provided by the department.

**23.6(2) *Time of submission.*** Applications for funds shall be reviewed and selected for funding at least twice per year. The department shall publish on its website the date and time for submitting a funding proposal, providing at least 90 days' notice. Applications must be submitted to the department as described on the website. Changes to grant applications must be submitted to the department no later than 4 p.m. the day prior to the committee review date. Upon timely notice to eligible recipients, additional selection periods may be scheduled if necessary to expedite the distribution of these funds. In emergencies, local entities can obtain a waiver so that acquisition projects may be approved for retroactive payments, provided that funds are available and the project meets all other criteria.

**23.6(3) *Local funding.*** By signing the application, the applicant agency is certifying that all required match has been identified and is committed and available for the project. An applicant shall certify in writing that it has the 25 percent match committed and available, by signing on the signature block provided on the form, and shall state the means of providing for the local share. All necessary approvals for acquisition and financing shall be included with the application. All financial income received directly or indirectly from sources that would have been paid to the previous landowner as a result of a purchase agreement or other title transfer action will be completely documented in the application.

**23.6(4) *Development projects.*** An application for development project assistance may include development on more than one area if the development is of a like nature (e.g., planting trees and shrubs).

This rule is intended to implement the provisions of Iowa Code section 483A.3.  
[ARC 8885B, IAB 6/30/10, effective 8/18/10; ARC 6789C, IAB 1/11/23, effective 2/15/23]

**571—23.7(483A) Project review and selection.**

**23.7(1) *Review and selection committee.***

*a.* A review and selection committee, hereinafter referred to as the committee, composed of one person appointed by the director to represent the department and designated by the director as chairperson and four persons appointed by the director to represent county conservation boards shall determine which grant applications and amendment requests shall be selected for funding. Additionally, there shall be at

least two alternates designated by the director to represent the county conservation boards in the event of a conflict of interest.

*b. Conflict of interest.* An individual who is a member, volunteer, or employee of a county conservation board that has submitted a project shall not serve on the scoring committee during that award cycle. Instead, one of the alternates shall review and score in the individual’s place.

**23.7(2) Consideration withheld.** The committee will not consider any application which, on the date of the selection session, is not complete, or for which additional pertinent information has been requested and not received.

**23.7(3) Application rating system.** The committee will apply a numerical rating system to each grant application which is considered for fund assistance. The following criteria, with a weight factor for each, will be considered:

Wildlife habitat needs	2
Existing or potential habitat quality	3
Cost-effectiveness	1 if at least 35 percent less than appraised amount 2 if at least 45 percent less than appraised amount
Species diversity	1

Each criterion will be given a score of from 0 to 10 which is then multiplied by the weight factor. Three additional criteria will be considered in the rating system:

*a. Prior assistance.* Any applicant who has never received a prior grant for acquisition of land will be given a bonus of 5 points.

*b. Active projects.* Any applicant who has one or more active projects at the time of application rating will be assessed 5 penalty points for each one that has not been completed by the date specified in the project agreement. A project is deemed closed after the project has had a final inspection, all funds have been paid and, in the case of acquisition, the title has been transferred from the seller.

*c. Urgency.* Projects may be given 1 or 2 bonus points if there is a strong urgency to acquire lands which might otherwise be lost.

All points will be totaled for each application, and those applications receiving the highest scores will be selected for fund assistance to the extent of the allotment for each semiannual period, except that any project scoring a total of not more than 45 points will not be funded.

**23.7(4) Applications not selected for fund assistance.** All applications not selected for fund assistance will be retained on file for consideration and possible funding during subsequent review periods or until a request for withdrawal is received from the applicant. Applications which have been considered and not selected for funding during three consecutive review periods will be returned to the applicant.

**23.7(5) Rating system not used.** The rating system will not be applied during any semiannual period in which the total grant request, including backlogged applications, is less than the allotment. Applications will be reviewed only to determine eligibility and overall desirability, and to ascertain that they meet minimum scoring requirements.

**23.7(6) Rating of scores for tie breakers.** If two or more projects receive the same score, the committee shall use the points awarded to existing or potential habitat quality to determine which project has a higher rank. If after considering the existing or potential habitat quality points the project scores remain tied, the committee will then consider the points awarded for species diversity. If after considering the species diversity points the project scores remain tied, the committee will then consider the points awarded for wildlife habitat needs.

[ARC 8885B, IAB 6/30/10, effective 8/18/10; ARC 6789C, IAB 1/11/23, effective 2/15/23]

**571—23.8(483A) Commission review.** The natural resource commission will review and act upon all committee recommendations semiannually at the next following commission meeting. The commission may reject any application selected for funding.

**571—23.9(483A) Grant amendments.** Projects for which grants have been approved may be amended, if funds are available, to increase or decrease project scope or to increase or decrease project costs and fund assistance. Project changes must be approved by the director prior to their inception. Amendments to increase project costs and fund assistance due to cost overruns will not be approved where funds have already been committed or the work already performed.

**571—23.10(483A) Timely commencement of projects.** Grant recipients are expected to carry out their projects in an expeditious manner. Projects for which grants are approved shall be commenced within six months of the date upon which the grantee is notified that the project is approved, or at another date agreed upon by both parties. Failure to do so may be cause for termination of the project and cancellation of the grant by the commission.

**571—23.11(483A) Project period.** A project period which is commensurate with the work to be accomplished will be assigned to each project. Project period extensions will be granted only in a case of extenuating circumstances.

**571—23.12(483A) Payments.**

**23.12(1) Grant amount.** Grant recipients will be paid 75 percent of all eligible costs incurred on a project up to the amount of the grant unless otherwise specified in the project agreement.

**23.12(2) Project billings.** Grant recipients shall submit billings for reimbursements or cost-sharing on forms provided by the commission.

**23.12(3) Project billing frequency.** Project billings for development shall be submitted on the following basis:

- a. Up to \$10,000 total project cost—one billing.
- b. Over \$10,000 total project cost—no more than two billings.

**23.12(4) Final project billing.** A final project billing shall be submitted within 90 days following the end of a project period. Failure to do so may be cause for termination of the project with no further reimbursement to the grant recipient.

**23.12(5) Documentation.** Grant recipients shall provide documentation as required by the department to substantiate all costs incurred on a project.

**23.12(6) Reimbursement withheld.** Ten percent of the total reimbursement due any grant recipient for a development project will be withheld pending a final site inspection or until any irregularities discovered as a result of a final inspection have been resolved.

**23.12(7) Acquisition projects.** If clearly requested in the project application and the applicant has shown good cause for such procedure, the department may approve direct payment to the seller of the state's share provided that marketable fee simple title, free and clear of all liens and encumbrances or material objections, is obtained by the local entity at the time of payments and state funds are then available.

**23.12(8) Development projects.** On approved development projects, payment will be made by the state only as reimbursement for funds already expended by the local entity.

**571—23.13(483A) Record keeping and retention.** A grant recipient shall keep adequate records relating to its administration of a project, particularly relating to all incurred costs and direct or indirect income from other sources that normally would have been paid to the previous landowner resulting from a purchase agreement or other title transfer action. A copy of the county's audits particularly showing such income and disbursements for the grant period will be submitted to the department of natural resources' budget and grants bureau. These records shall be available for audit by appropriate personnel of the department and the state auditor's office. All records shall be retained in accordance with state laws.

**571—23.14(483A) Penalties.** Whenever any property, real or personal, acquired or developed with habitat stamp fund assistance passes from the control of the grantee or is used for other purposes which

conflict with the project purpose, it will be considered an unlawful use of the funds. The department shall notify the local entity of any such violation.

**23.14(1) *Remedy.*** Funds thus used unlawfully must be returned to the department for inclusion in the wildlife habitat stamp fund, or a property of equal value at current market prices and with commensurate benefits to wildlife must be acquired with local, non-cost-shared funds to replace it. Such replacement must be approved by the commission. The local entity shall have a period of two years after notification by the department in which to correct the unlawful use of funds. The remedies provided by this rule are in addition to others provided by law.

**23.14(2) *Land disposal.*** Whenever it has been determined and agreed upon by the grantee and the commission that land acquired or developed with habitat stamp fund assistance is no longer of value for the project purpose, or that the local entity has other good cause, the land, with the approval of the commission, may be disposed of and the proceeds thereof used to acquire or develop an area of equal value, or 75 percent of the proceeds shall be returned to the state for inclusion in the wildlife habitat stamp fund.

**23.14(3) *Ineligibility.*** Whenever a local agency shall be in violation of this rule, it shall be ineligible for further assistance until the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of the commission.

[ARC 8885B, IAB 6/30/10, effective 8/18/10]

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 483A.3.

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<sup>1</sup> Effective date of rule 23.1(7/31/91) delayed until adjournment of the 1992 Session of the General Assembly by the Administrative Rules Review Committee (ARRC) at its meeting held July 12, 1991. Delay lifted at the ARRC meeting held November 13, 1991.