**Section 3051.60 Application Evaluation and Selection**

a) All applications received by the application deadline will be reviewed by DNR staff.

b) Applications will be screened for applicant eligibility (see Section 3051.40) and application completeness (see Section 3051.50(e)).

c) Eligible and complete applications will be evaluated by DNR staff, considering the following criteria:

1) Project benefits to implementing the needs and priorities identified in the Department's current approved:

A) Illinois Natural Areas Plan;

B) Illinois Sustainable Natural Areas Vision; and

C) Illinois Wildlife Action Plan;

2) Project benefits to the following stewardship needs:

1. actions identified in a Commission-approved management schedule for each site; and

B) actions improving or addressing threats to the qualifying features for which the site was dedicated/registered;

3) Project benefits in consideration of the resources to be impacted by the project:

A) Rarity and condition of resources;

B) Severity of stewardship need; and

C) Other resource-based considerations;

4) The availability of the matching funds required by Section 3051.30(d);

5) The availability of other nonfinancial resources to complete the project, such as personnel, volunteers, equipment or supplies;

6) How the project will increase the stewardship capacity of the applicant;

7) Applicant's past performance in completing Grant Program projects or other DNR grant projects;

8) Ability of the applicant to complete the project in the timeframe planned; and

9) Adequacy and sufficient justification of the project budget.

d) DNR staff will verify that each grantee has completed a prequalification process and has been determined "qualified" by GATU (see GATA Rule Section 7000.70).

e) DNR staff will provide to the Director all eligible and complete applications and a prioritized list of applications recommended because of their consistency with the purposes of the Act based on the evaluation criteria of subsection (c).

f) Based on available funding, the Director will determine what grants will be awarded after considering the recommendations of Department staff. Applicants shall be notified of the Director's final decision on grant awards.

g) For a grant applicant who is a prior recipient of an award under this Part, the Department will review available information on the awardee's prior performance and consider that information when assessing grantee risk. This is part of the grantee risk assessment provided by GATU (see GATA Rule 7000.340).