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Dear Prospective Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the FY04 Annual Grant for the Self-Help, Urban Self-Help, and federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Programs. These programs provide financial assistance to cities and towns for the purchase of conservation land, the purchase of parkland, or the renovation or development of public outdoor recreation facilities.

In anticipation of, and contingent upon, the availability of funds, I am pleased to announce that my office, through the Division of Conservation Services (DCS), will conduct the annual FY04 grant round for these programs. I invite you to apply for funds by the filing deadline of **August 29, 2003**. By that time we expect to know how much state funding will be available. Due to the time it takes for you to prepare applications, I wanted to give you as much time as possible and hope that you will apply. While the amount of state bond funds to be made available is unknown at this time, we do expect approximately \$2 million to be appropriated by Congress for the stateside LWCF Program. These federal monies may be utilized either for conservation or active recreation projects.

#### Self-Help Program

The Self-Help Program provides funds to conservation commissions for the purchase of conservation land. The priority for this year's Self-Help grant awards will be for the purchase of open space for biological conservation (including species and habitats) and protection of sensitive stream, river, lake and pond watersheds. Projects that augment existing conservation lands, or connect to existing conservation lands, and thereby help to preserve the integrity and health of the local or regional ecosystems, will receive greater consideration for funding.

#### Urban Self-Help Program

The Urban Self-Help Program assists cities and urban towns with the acquisition, construction and/or renovation of parks. The priorities for this year's Urban Self-Help grants will be the innovative re-use of brownfield sites and projects that provide recreational opportunities to urban populations. Projects servicing a statewide or regional population will be given special consideration.

LWCF Program (Land and Water Conservation Fund)

These federal grant monies can be used for either state or local agency conservation or park projects as long as outdoor recreation is the primary use. The focus for conservation projects is identical to the Self-Help Program. Park projects should reflect the same project focus as the Urban Self-Help program. The federal funds are being announced in anticipation of a congressional appropriation for FY04. Approximately \$2 million is expected from the federal L&WCF appropriation. Applicants should apply to the Self-Help Program for conservation land acquisition projects, and to the Urban Self-Help Program for parkland acquisition, improvement, or development projects. The National Park Service, pending the federal appropriations process, will announce the total money available to the stateside LWCF Program next fall. The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) reserves the right to determine the allocation of state and federal sources of grant funds as project and budgetary conditions warrant.

The Self-Help, Urban Self-Help, and LWCF Programs each have specific eligibility requirements and are awarded on a competitive basis. Grants for state assistance range from 52-70% reimbursement based upon a community's equalized valuation per capita (EVPC) decile rank, and 50% for federal assistance. The maximum grant award for any project has been set at \$500,000, but may be reduced or increased at my discretion.

Proposals must advance watershed and ecosystem protection and Smart Growth and community preservation. Such projects should promote sustainable communities by protecting significant environmental or recreation resources, guiding development away from these resources and to appropriate development areas, and should maximize accessibility via alternative transportation modes (e.g., public transit, bicycle, walking). Proposals should involve inter-municipal and municipal-state cooperation, and multiple partners whenever possible. I encourage you to collaborate when possible with nonprofit conservation organizations such as your local land trust. EOEA and its agencies have been working with nonprofits on *The Statewide Land Conservation Plan – a Partnership*, a map of land in Massachusetts that is of interest to many conservation stakeholders. This map will be available online within the next few months. In the meantime, applicants may contact our MassGIS office at [www.mass.gov/mgis](http://www.mass.gov/mgis) to obtain a copy. I also invite you to visit the Community Preservation page of EOEA's web site at [www.mass.gov/envir](http://www.mass.gov/envir) and click on Community Preservation, for information that can help you implement land conservation projects in the broader context of historic preservation, housing, and transportation considerations.

I encourage each and every community to take advantage of this opportunity. Please contact DCS at (617)-1011, if you wish to learn more about these grant programs and to request an application package. More information and application forms may also be found on the DCS web page at [www.state.ma.us/envir/dcs](http://www.state.ma.us/envir/dcs). Thank you for your partnership in land conservation.

Regards,



Ellen Roy Herzfelder