

§ 143-215.72. Review of applications.

(a) The Secretary shall receive and review applications for the grants specified in this Part and approve, approve in part, or disapprove such applications.

(b) In reviewing each application, the Secretary shall consider:

- (1) The economic, social, and environmental benefits to be provided by the projects;
- (2) Regional benefits of projects to an area greater than the area under the jurisdiction of the local sponsoring entity;
- (3) The financial resources of the local sponsoring entity;
- (4) The environmental impact of the project;
- (5) Any direct benefit to State-owned lands and properties.

(c) When the Secretary issues new or revised policies for review of grant applications and fund disbursement under this Part, those policies shall not apply to a project already approved for funding unless the project applicant agrees to the new or revised policy. For purposes of this section, a project is approved for funding when the Department enters into a contract or other binding agreement to provide any share of State funding for the project. Nothing in this subsection is intended to preclude the Secretary from issuing or enforcing policies applicable to projects approved for funding in order to comply with a requirement of State law or federal law or regulations.

(d) The following procedures apply only to grants for the purpose set forth in G.S. 143-215.71(8):

- (1) A nongovernmental entity managing, administering, or executing the grant on behalf of a unit of local government may apply as a co-applicant for the grant and may be included as a responsible party on any required resolution issued by the unit of local government.
- (2) Upon request signed by the grant applicant and co-applicant, the Department shall make periodic payments to the co-applicant for its share of nonfederal costs of a project prior to receipt of a final practice approval from the Natural Resources Conservation Service if the grantee has submitted a certified reimbursement request or invoice.
- (3) The Department shall annually report no later than November 1 to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources and the Fiscal Research Division regarding grants for projects funded through the Western Stream Initiative. The report shall include measures of grant administration and grant implementation efficiency and effectiveness. For purposes of this subdivision, the "Western Stream Initiative" refers to the portion of federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program funding provided to the Western North Carolina Stream Initiative for the counties of Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cherokee, Clay, Cleveland, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Iredell, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, and Yancey.
- (4) A single project shall consist of all the landowners and other participants under a project design contract approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Service for a contiguous section of stream. (1979, c. 1046, s. 1; 2017-57, s. 36.3(h); 2017-212, s. 4.10(b); 2020-18, s. 13(c); 2021-180, s. 40.3(e).)