**Section 3050.70 Project Evaluation Priorities**

a) The following factors shall be used by the Department in evaluating and recommending local project applications for funding assistance consideration:

1) Statewide Natural Resource and Natural Resource Related Outdoor Recreation Priorities – 60%

A) Department Statewide Priorities – 67%

Projects are evaluated in terms of their ability to address major outdoor natural resource related recreation and conservation purposes and issues identified by the Department in statewide or regional plans. These include, but are not limited to, the protection and stewardship of lakes, rivers, streams, open space, parks, natural lands, wetlands, prairies, forests, watersheds, resource-rich areas, greenways, significant fish and wildlife resources, and endangered or threatened species habitats; and the extent to which the project contributes to the ecological viability of a park, conservation area, forest preserve, nature preserve, land and water reserve, greenway and long distance trail corridors. These priorities are listed in the Department's OLT Local Participation Grant Manual, available from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Division of Grant Administration, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield IL 62702-1271.

B) Statewide Local Needs Assessment – 33%

Determination of local need is based on a comparison of existing supply and distribution of open space and park land acreage, measured in acres/capita, to the statewide median and/or to locally adopted standards. Natural resource related recreation needs based on project service area are also given consideration.

2) Project Concept and Site Characteristics – 25%

The project proposal is evaluated in terms of the site's ecological resources and aesthetic qualities, including accessibility; soil, topographic and hydrologic characteristics; site vegetation; wildlife benefits; compatibility with adjacent land uses; environmental intrusion on the site; and demonstrated commitment to natural resource restoration and management of the site, sites threatened with development, impacts to cultural and natural resources, and the natural resources related recreation provided by the project.

3) Local Planning – 10%

The major consideration under this criterion is public support and input into the project plan and existence of a comprehensive local open space plan identifying the proposed project as a priority. Consideration is also given for natural resource related recreation opportunities not specifically identified in a local plan but having documented widespread public support.

4) Other Considerations – 5%

Relevant factors considered in evaluating the overall merits of a project and need for funding include projects located in inner-urban areas; involving private donations and match that leverages local funds; or from applicants not previously benefitting from OLT assistance.

5) Penalty Factors – (deduct up to 15%)

Consideration is given to the applicant's past performance in completing OLT or other Department grant projects, restoration or development plans or unresolved project violations; ability to properly maintain the project site; and failure to participate with the Department in completing the "Illinois Recreation Facilities Inventory" (IRFI).

b) Project Application Review and Grant Award

Department grant staff, in consultation with executive and appropriate resource staff, reviews all applications in accordance with the established evaluation criteria. Preliminary recommendations are then submitted to the Department's Natural Resource Advisory Board for consideration at a public hearing conducted by the Board, after which final recommendations are forwarded to the Director for OLT grant approval.

(Source: Amended at 28 Ill. Reg. 10655, effective July 13, 2004)