



## **Boating Services Unit**

# **Boating Infrastructural Grant (BIG)**

## **Program Manual**

## A. Program Description and Requirements

### 1. Purpose

The BIG program provides grant funding assistance for the construction, renovation, and maintenance of public and private boating infrastructure tie-up facilities with features for recreational transient (10 days or less) boats 26 feet or more in length that are available to the general boating public. Since the focus of the program is on larger recreational vessels, a minimum of 6 feet mean low water (mlw) is generally required.

### 2. Source of Funds

The BIG Program was established through the Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998. Funding for this program comes from 2% of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. The Trust Fund is revenue collected from excise taxes on sport fishing equipment, electric motors and sonar, import duties on fishing tackle, yachts and pleasure craft, a portion of gasoline tax attributable to motorboats and small engines, and interest earned on Trust Fund.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services Wildlife (FWS) Sport Fish Restoration Program makes the BIG funding available to states and territories annually.

### 3. Administration

In Maryland, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Boating Services Unit is designated as the administering agency for the Maryland BIG program. DNR encourages local units of government and private facilities to participate in this program by submitting grant applications for eligible transient facilities.

Under this grant program, the FWS is the “Grantor,” DNR is the “Grantee,” and the owner of the facility is the “Sub-grantee.”

### 4. Types of funding

There are two levels of funding available – BIG Standard (formerly Tier I) and BIG Select (formerly Tier II):

- BIG Standard grants, providing up to \$100,000 federal funds per year, are non-competitive on a federal level. In other words, DNR does not need to compete with other states in order to receive \$100,000 in BIG Standard funding each year. However, BIG Standard funding may be competitive within the state if more than one facility in Maryland is seeking BIG Standard funding.
- BIG Select grants, providing up to \$1.5 million in federal funds per project, are available each year on a nationally competitive basis.

Note: BIG Select grants are highly competitive so, in order to improve the chances that a particular project will be selected for funding, the funding proposal should be much more in depth and provide much more justification than a BIG Standard proposal.

## 5. General requirements

The applicants must own or have long-term irrevocable control of the project area and rights of way to and from the project area. The term must cover the entire useful life of the project (typically 20-30 years).

The proposed project area typically must have a minimum 6 feet of water depth (mlw). The sub-grantee is solely responsible for maintaining the required minimum depth for the useful life of the project at the sub-grantee's own expense. The consequence of not being able to maintain this depth is that the sub-grantee would have to return ALL grant funds to DNR.

BIG program is a reimbursement grant program. Federal funds can be used to cover up to 75% of the approved project costs. The remaining "matching" funds must come from state, local, or other non-federal sources.

State Waterway Improvement funds may possibly be used as match for publicly owned facilities, but state funds cannot be used as match at privately owned marinas, even if the marinas are open to the general public. Privately owned marinas must either provide their own match or find non-state/federal partners.

Once FWS approves the project, a Land Control Agreement (LCA) must be executed between DNR and the sub-grantee. The LCA is a legally binding contract that ensures all federal and state requirements will be met for the useful life the project.

**Should the facility be privately owned, in addition to an LCA, the owner of the facility would be required to record the receipt of the federal funds and the existence of the LCA in their property's deed (See Appendix D).**

## 6. Eligible and non-eligible activities:

Specific program eligibilities are detailed in 50 CFR Part 86 Federal Register/Vol. 79, No. 80/Friday, April 25, 2014/ Proposed Rules, Subpart B - Program Eligibility, specifically §86.11 and §86.16

## **B. Project proposal format and submission process**

1. Complete Maryland BIG Program Application for Grant Funding Form (**Appendix A**). Sign and date the original application.
2. The complete application packages must include:
  - a. original Application for Grant Funding Form
  - b. a site map
  - c. itemized costs estimate
  - d. Any supporting documents

*Please be advised that incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.*

3. Applications are due by **April 30 each year** and must be submitted to:

Li Lan Carson, Federal Projects Leader  
Boating Services Unit  
Department of Natural Resources  
Tawes Office Building, E-4  
580 Taylor Avenue  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(410) 260-8452

## **C. Review and Selection**

Once the application is received, DNR staff will contact the applicant for a site visit. A site visit will help DNR understand what the applicant is interested in doing as well as the situation at the facility. DNR may conduct a bathymetric survey to verify the water depth requirement (6' mlw) during the site visit.

DNR staff will review the applications and make selection(s) of which project(s) will be submitted to FWS for possible BIG funding. Upon being informed that your project is up for further consideration, the applicant should begin work on putting together a Project Statement (see samples in **Appendix B**). The deadline for submission of the Project Statement and all supporting documentation to DNR is **August 31 each year.**

Please keep in mind that BIG Select Project Statements may take several months for you to prepare. If you are submitting an application for BIG Select, it is recommended that you start drafting your Project Statement at the same time when you are filling out the state application form. If for some reason you miss the deadline of submitting the final project statement by August 31, DNR will retain your application and submit the application package to FWS the following year once DNR verifies that you are still interested in pursuing a BIG Select grant.

## D. Notification of Award

Once FWS approves a project for funding, DNR will send a letter of award to the applicant. DNR and the applicant (sub-grantee) will then enter into a legally binding contract (a.k.a. Land Control Agreement) which will ensure that the project will remain in compliance with all federal and state requirements for the useful life of the project. A sample of the LCA can be found in **Appendix C**. If the facility is privately owned, a notice of this agreement must be made part of the facility's deed (see **Appendix D**). Only after the LCA is fully executed, DNR will issue an authorization to proceed and the sub-grantee can begin the work.

## E. Monitoring

DNR staff will monitor progress in accordance with the stated timelines and objectives as set forth in the approved Project Statement. Upon completion of the project, DNR will conduct periodic inspections of the facility to make sure the facility is in compliance with BIG Program rules and regulations.

## F. Anticipated program timeline

April 30	Applications due by 4:00 p.m.
May/June	Site visits
August 31	Project Statement due if selected for submission to FWS
September/October	DNR Submits applications to FWS, depending on the due date set by FWS
March/April	FWS announces grant award

## G. Governing guidance

- Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998
- 50 CFR Part 86  
(Federal Register/Vol. 79, No. 80/Friday, April 25, 2014/ Proposed Rules)
- 2 CFR Part 200
- USFWS Manual Chapters
- Maryland DNR Boating Services Waterway Improvement Fund Grants Manual