

Program 303 - Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund

Program Description

The Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund was established in 1963 to provide state financial assistance for the acquisition of the necessary land rights for flood control structures. Land rights can be in the form of easements, rights-of-way or purchases. The fund can financially participate in only 25% of the number of land rights involved. When land is purchased for a project it must be sold within ten years with proceeds of the sale being returned to the fund for reuse. A special provision of the law allows any political subdivision to acquire any fee title property at appraised value, provided that the property is utilized for public purposes such as recreation or fish and wildlife enhancement. To date a total of 38 tracts have been retained for public use.

This program is primarily used to leverage federal funds on projects where the construction costs are reimbursed by the federal government and the local sponsor must provide the necessary land rights. However, the Fund can also be utilized for projects which are entirely funded by Natural Resources Districts or other local entities. The statutory requirement of the program is that the local unit of government procures a minimum of 75% of the needed number of land rights before they are eligible to receive state funds. Funds provided for easements and fee title acquisitions are based on either appraisals or court awards, the latter when condemnation proceedings must be initiated.

Program Objectives

The objective of the program is to provide financial assistance to local units of government in the procurement of lands, easements, and rights-of-way that are needed for construction of Commission approved flood control projects. Secondary objectives are to assist in accelerating the watershed planning process and to assist sponsors in all aspects of land rights acquisition and land management. The Commission has been assigned, by statute, the responsibility for flood control programs, and the financial assistance provided to local sponsors for land rights acquisition under this program is an integral part of the total flood control program.

Performance Measures

Money from sales of fee title property following completion of projects for which the property was acquired is the primary source of funding for this program. While the law provides for sales within ten years, an attempt is made to sell the property as soon as it is considered to be in optimum condition for resale - usually within six years. This practice enables the Natural Resources Commission to more quickly commit funding to new projects. Another goal is to resell property at a premium over the purchase price. This helps offset the loss of funds used to acquire easements and rights-of-way.

Specific measures of performance for administering the Small Watershed Flood Control Program are as follows.

1. Maintain the asset value of the Fund (cash and real estate) at a minimum of \$1,000,000.

2. Make funds available for sponsors in order to expedite the construction of cost effective flood control projects.
3. Assist project sponsors in their utilization of the fund and management of lands.
4. Sell lands acquired in fee title on a timely basis to maximize the revolving nature of the fund.