

By Senators Forman and Mitchell

32-695-99

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to recreational resources;
3 requiring the Department of Environmental
4 Protection to establish the Recreational
5 Community Assistance Program to provide grant
6 funds to operate recreational resources for use
7 by local governmental entities defined as rural
8 communities; providing for funding the grant
9 program from moneys dedicated through general
10 revenue; requiring the Department of
11 Environmental Protection to adopt rules for
12 selecting governmental entities to receive
13 grant funds; providing an appropriation;
14 providing an effective date.

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16 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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18 Section 1. Recreational Community Assistance
19 Program.--

20 (1) The Legislature recognizes that it is in the
21 public interest that the state assist in creating and
22 providing recreational opportunities in rural communities.
23 Recreation, being important to a healthful lifestyle, must be
24 afforded a favorable environment in which to grow. The
25 Legislature recognizes that the operating costs of providing
26 recreational opportunities create a barrier for many
27 communities throughout the state. The Legislature seeks to
28 address this problem and assist local governmental entities by
29 providing grants-in-aid through the creation of the
30 Recreational Community Assistance Program.

31 (2) As used in this section, the term:

1 (a) "Rural community" means a local governmental
2 entity, including a county, which meets criteria set forth in
3 section 288.065(2), Florida Statutes.

4 (b) "Match" means the provision of resources by the
5 local governmental entity receiving funds through the
6 Recreational Community Assistance Program in the ratio
7 required by interim policy or administrative rule.

8 (c) "Recreation" means the pursuit of leisure
9 activities in an indoor or outdoor environment.

10 (3)(a) The Department of Environmental Protection
11 shall establish the Recreational Community Assistance Program
12 to provide grants to qualified local governmental entities on
13 a reimbursement basis. The program is to provide grants to
14 rural communities for operating recreational resources.

15 (b) The grant program shall be funded by moneys
16 appropriated from the General Revenue Fund.

17 (4)(a) The Department of Environmental Protection
18 shall by rule prescribe procedures governing the program,
19 which must include, but need not be limited to, a competitive
20 project-selection process designed to maximize the
21 recreational capabilities of the qualified local governmental
22 entity.

23 (b) Pursuant to section 120.54, Florida Statutes,
24 first-year funding is to be administered by the Department of
25 Environmental Protection under an interim policy pending
26 adoption of administrative rule.

27 (c) Eligibility criteria must, at a minimum, include:

28 1. Program funding for counties having populations no
29 greater than 125,000; and

30 2. Development of a comprehensive plan that addresses
31 the recreational needs of the community.

1 (5) The Department of Environmental Protection shall
2 adopt rules as necessary to govern the Recreational Community
3 Assistance Program in the best interests of state and local
4 governmental entities. The rules must contain, but are not
5 limited to, provisions that address the following matters:

6 (a) A funding cap that establishes a maximum grant
7 amount for each grant cycle.

8 (b) A term for grant projects which requires the local
9 governmental entities to agree to continue to operate and
10 maintain all facilities and programs that are developed under
11 the terms of the grant after the project period is completed
12 for a minimum of 5 years.

13 (c) A local match that requires local governmental
14 entities to provide local match funding for subsequent years
15 to equal the difference between that year and the first full
16 year funding. The match must be based on the total amount of
17 funding for the first year. Funds must be disbursed in
18 decreasing amounts from the first year for a total of 4 years
19 of funding. The local governmental entity will not be required
20 to provide a match the first year of funding. After the first
21 year a match of 25 percent will be required. Each year the
22 match will increase by 25 percent until the final year, when a
23 match of 100 percent will be required.

24 (d) The allowable uses of grant funds through one or
25 both of the two following components:

26 1. A program component under which the grant may be
27 used to pay for:

28 a. Staff salaries;

29 b. Equipment; and

30 c. Transportation of program participants.

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1 2. An operational component under which the grant may
2 be used to pay for:

3 a. Facility maintenance;

4 b. Administration costs not exceeding 15 percent; and

5 c. Facility operating expenses.

6 (6) Any program funded under this section must:

7 (a) Be subject to a local resolution instituting any
8 elements funded by the program. The governmental entity
9 receiving the funds and operating the program must agree to
10 fund the program for a minimum of 9 years, including the
11 project period and a minimum of 5 years subsequent to the
12 conclusion of the project period.

13 (b) Provide recreational opportunities as set forth in
14 an interim policy or administrative rule.

15 (c) Provide a match of local resources, which may
16 include, but is not limited to, cash.

17 (7) Funds may be released, beginning in fiscal year
18 1999-2000, for each project selected by the Department of
19 Environmental Protection.

20 (8) This section does not prohibit local governmental
21 entities from engaging in partnerships with private entities
22 or other governmental agencies to accomplish the goals of the
23 Recreational Communities Assistance Project.

24 (9) If a governmental entity violates any provision of
25 this section, it will be ineligible for funding for 10 years.

26 Section 2. The sum of \$2 million is appropriated from
27 the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Environmental
28 Protection to carry out the provisions of this act for the
29 1999-2000 fiscal year.

30 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 1999.

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SENATE SUMMARY

Directs the Department of Environmental Protection to establish the Recreational Community Assistance Program to provide grant funds to rural communities. Provides eligibility criteria. Requires the department to adopt rules governing the program, including rules to establish funding caps and terms of projects and to provide for local match funding and for the use of grant funds. Provides an appropriation.