New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

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Scott R. Mason
Executive Director

May 17, 2023

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The Honorable Ken Weyler, Chairman
Fiscal Committee of the General Court *and*

His Excellency Governor Christopher T. Sununu
And the Honorable Council
State House
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

Pursuant to the provisions of RSA 14:30-a, VI, authorize the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFGD), to accept and expend $522,837 in federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF), for the purpose of continued funding for four existing temporary full time staff members to provide assistance in permit application review, effective upon Fiscal Committee and Governor and Council approval through June 30, 2025. This is an allowable use of ARPA SFRF funds under Section 602 (c)(1)(A) to respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts. **100% Federal Funds.**

Funding is contingent upon Fiscal Committee and Governor and Executive Council approval of the Department of Administrative Services consolidated statewide requested amendment to previous ARPA SFRF accept and expends, FIS 23-166, on the May 19, 2023 Fiscal Committee meeting and the May 31, 2023 Governor and Executive Council meeting.

Funds are to be budgeted in FY2023 in the following account:

03-75-75-751520-24750000[1] NH Fish and Game Department
ARPA Project Review

Fiscal Year 2023						
	Expense	**Class Description**	**Revenue**	**Current**	**Requested Action**	**Adjusted**
000		FEDERAL FUNDS	400338-16	510,887	522,837	1,033,724
00D		FED REV XFERS FR OTH	488544-69	92,171	0	92,171
		Total Expenses		**$603,058**	**$522,837**	**$1,125,895**
020	500200	CURRENT EXPENSES		9,744	1,750	11,494
030	500311	EQUIPMENT		4,716	875	5,591
039	500192	TELECOMMUNICATIONS		2,236	964	3,200
040	500800	INDIRECT COST		71,733	76,934	148,667
041	500801	AUDIT FUND SET ASIDE		326	721	1,047
059	500117	TEMP FULL TIME		317,186	289,257	606,443
060	500602	BENEFITS		195,367	149,836	345,203
070	500704	IN STATE TRAVEL		1,750	875	2,625
080	500719	OUT OF STATE TRAVEL		0	1,625	1,625
		Total Revenue		**$603,058**	**$522,837**	**$1,125,895**

EXPLANATION

The New Hampshire Fish & Game Department (NHFGD) reviews projects requiring state permits such as NH Department of Environmental Services (NH DES) Alteration of Terrain or wetlands for potential impacts to protected wildlife. During FY22/23, ARPA funds were authorized for use by NHFG to establish four project review staff, initially one position through an MOA with NH DES with already authorized funds and then three more with funds authorized through FIS 21-197. At that time, NHFG sought funding sufficient for positions through FY23, with the expectation that the positions would be needed beyond FY23 and would need to

[1] All direct program costs for positions 9T3159, 9T3158, and 9T3157 will be accounted for using activity 00FRF602WB7501A and all administrative and indirect costs will be accounted for using activity 00FRF602WB7501Z. Beginning in January 2025, program costs for position 9T3101 will be accounted for using 00FRF602WB7501A as well. Until such time and due to an existing MOA between NHFG and DES, 9T3101 will be accounted for using 00FRF602WB4401S. Accounting classifications may be subject to technical changes at the discretion of the Department of Administrative Services' Division of Accounting Services

request additional funds. NHFG is now requesting authorization to ensure sufficient funding through FY25. These positions are filled and have become a critical component of improvements in the permit review process.

With these funds, the NHFGD would maintain employment for these four full-time temporary staff members in FY24/25 in support of the review of permit applications and public sector capacity. Despite an increasing demand for overall permit review requests and associated administration in large part because of the influx of new projects funded with ARPA SFRF and other federal relief dollars, these staff have helped reduce permit review backlogs and will continue to allow NHFGD to provide timely review and consultation of state permit applications while providing adequate review of protected wildlife resources, especially at a time when federally-funded projects are expected to continue needing reviews over the next few years. Maintaining a timely state review process will continue to support the state's economic recovery.

From February 3, 2022 to May 8, 2023 (15 months), NHFGD received requests for 525 projects to review. Prior to hiring these four reviewers, NHDES Alteration of Terrain permit reviews for NHFGD took several months. The average NHFGD active review time on projects since hiring these four staff is 22 days (excluding time NHFGD is waiting for applicant to provide information). In addition to active project review, a NHFGD project review tracking system using *SmartSheets* has been developed and is being continually improved upon. As a result, project reviews are proceeding in a timely manner, and new procedures are being developed for ongoing support of efficient reviews for the public to facilitate ongoing economic recovery.

If funding is not available to continue these positions, it is likely that delays in permit reviews will return due to otherwise limited agency capacity, which could result in a diminished ability for NHFG to meet statutory requirements to avoid and minimize harm to threatened and endangered species, and is likely to result in increased project costs for applicants and less certainty in the process for them.

This request includes continued funding for three existing positions (Reviewer – LG23, 9T3159; Reviewer – LG23 9T3158, Program Planner – LG21, 9T3157) for FY24 and FY25, and one existing position (Reviewer – LG21, 9T3101) for the final 6 months of FY25 (federal funding has been provided through a separate authorization for 9T3101 through December 2024). The project will include costs associated with salary and benefits of staff, along with equipment, supplies, travel, training, telecommunications, and indirect necessary to perform job.

Funds are budgeted as follows:

Class 020 – Current Expenses – office supplies, paper, postage, and printer ink for staff

Class 030 – Equipment – Office equipment for staff

Class 039 – Telecommunications – phones and phone lines for staff

Class 040 - Indirect Costs – Indirect Costs paid to SWCAP and internal cost recoveries

Class 041 – Audit Fund Set-Aside-.001 of federal funds payable to DAS for audit fees

Class 059 – Temporary Full Time – for four existing temporary full-time positions noted above

Class 060 – Benefits – for the four existing temporary full-time positions noted above

Class 070 – In State Travel Reimbursement – mileage incurred for work related activities

Class 080 - Out of State Travel Reimbursement

Respectfully submitted,

Scott R. Mason
Executive Director

Kathy Ann LaBonte
Chief, Business Division