

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resource Commission**

ITEM

21

DECISION

TOPIC

USDA Community Facilities Grant – Purchase Body Armor and other
Specialized Emergency Response Law Enforcement Equipment for State Parks

Commission approval is requested to give the Director or his designee the authority sign the certifications and other paperwork USDA requires to award a USDA Rural Development grant.

The six district supervisors in the State Parks Bureau have each applied for an USDA Community Facilities Grant to purchase replacement body armor for each ranger in their district. The applications have been submitted to the respective Rural Conservation and Development (RC&D) office in each state park district. These vests require replacement every five years to ensure officer safety. Park Rangers are often the first responders in accident and law enforcement situations in our State Parks. As certified peace officers, specialized equipment is needed to protect their safety and give them the ability to protect others. The body armor currently issued to them has exceeded their life expectancy which puts them at risk and compromises the safety of the general public. Vest replacement is the common request of the grant by all six districts. Depending on need and availability of equipment funds, each district can independently request additional specialized emergency response equipment, such as portable handheld radios, automatic external defibrillators, and rescue boats and motors. This emergency response equipment will be welcomed additions to each district while providing officer safety. The grants have been reviewed favorably, which allows USDA to proceed with the next step of asking the DNR to complete forms and processes needed to move ahead for funding. While success of receiving the grant appears promising, it is not guaranteed at this time. The total project amount will vary for each of the districts depending on the number of rangers and equipment requested. The maximum amount of each grant is limited to \$5,400 and 25% matching funds are required.

Prior to receiving final approval for the grant, the DNR must hold at least one public meeting to allow the citizenry an opportunity to become acquainted with the proposed project. USDA has agreed that the Commission's meeting and approval of this item will satisfy the public meeting requirement.

Kevin Szcodronski, State Parks Bureau Chief
Conservation and Recreation Division
September 10, 2009