

## Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Local Community Grants

### The Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Schools

LWCF does not allow development of school "athletic plant" facilities such as stadiums, running tracks for interscholastic athletics and athletic fields with grandstands. Every school must include a completed and signed Interlocal Agreement as part of its LWCF grant application. The agreement must be signed by the school and the local political subdivision (city or county).

Because of the frequent changes that may occur at a school district level, and the potential for school closure, many states do not offer LWCF assistance to schools. One of the federal requirements of the LWCF program is that the project site be kept open to the general public for outdoor recreation and maintained in perpetuity (forever). In some situations, schools have moved or closed, leaving an undue burden and responsibility to the state agency administering the grant program.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) understands the important role schools play in most of Montanas smaller communities. In some cases, the local school is the prime center of activity for outdoor recreation. Therefore, FWP will continue to offer LWCF grants to school districts. However, there are certain grant restrictions that apply only to schools.

LWCF does not allow development of school "athletic plant" facilities such as stadiums, running tracks for interscholastic athletics and athletic fields with grandstands. Projects sponsored by a school district for projects on or adjacent to school lands are eligible if they are to serve a general public recreation need. Facilities needed to meet the physical education and athletic program requirements of a school, or those that are a part of the normal and usual program and responsibility of educational institutions are not eligible for LWCF assistance.

The basic concept is that LWCF assistance can be used to expand facilities so that they may be available for community use. An example would be if a school has a tennis court and desires to add lighting so the public could use it in the evening. Another example would be that a school has a football field for their varsity games and desires to construct another field for grassed area activities for the general public. This would not preclude exclusive school use of certain facilities at certain specified times for instruction or competition provided there is adequate public use at all other times. Support facilities are eligible to the extent that they are needed to meet the designed public recreation use capacity.

Signs must be installed informing the public that the facilities are open to the general public. They also are to show the times when the facilities are reserved for exclusive school use. An estimate of the amount of time the area will be used by the general public and the amount of time it will be used for exclusive school purposes must be enclosed with an application for a project to be on school lands. A time schedule showing exclusive school use must accompany the project application.