Boating Infrastructure Grant Program

A. GRANT BASICS

Purpose of the Boating Infrastructure Grant Program

This program will:

(a) Create dockage from transient recreational boats 26 feet or more in length for recreational opportunities and safe harbors;
(b) Provide navigational aids for boaters to use these facilities;
(c) Enhance access to recreational, historic, cultural, natural, and scenic resources;
(d) Strengthen local ties to the boating community and its economic benefits;
(e) Promote public/private partnerships and entrepreneurial opportunities;
(f) Provide continuity of public access to the shore; and
(g) Promote awareness of transient boating opportunities.

Definitions of terms used
For the purposes of this part, the following terms are defined;
Construct means engaging in activities that produce new capital improvements and increase the value or usefulness of existing property. These activities include building new tie-up facilities or replacing or expanding existing tie-up facilities.
Maintain means engaging in activities that allow the facility to continue to function, such as repairing docks. These activities exclude routine janitorial activities.
Navigable water means waters connected to or part of the jurisdictional waters of the United States that transient recreational vessels currently use of can use.
Recreational vessels mean motorized boats 26 feet or more in length manufactured for and operated primarily for pleasure, including vessels leased, rented, or chartered to another person for his or her pleasure.
Renovate means to rehabilitate or repair a tie-up facility to restore it to its original intended purpose, or to expand its purpose to allow transient recreational vessels.
Transient means passing through or by a place, staying 15 days or less.
Tie-up facilities mean facilities that transient recreational vessels occupy temporarily, not to exceed 15 consecutive days; for example, temporary shelter from a storm; a way station en route to a destination; a mooring feature for fishing; or a dock to visit a recreational, historic, cultural, natural, or scenic site.
Water-body means the lake, section of river, or specific area of the coast, such as a harbor or cove, where tie-up facilities or boat access sites are located.

What does the national BIG Program do?
This program provides grant funds to States to administer for the construction, renovation, and maintenance of tie-up facilities with features for transient boaters in vessels 26 feet or more in length, and for production and distribution of information and educational materials about the program.

What types of projects can be funded?
Boating infrastructure refers to features that provide stopover places for transient recreational vessels to tie up. These features include, but are not limited to:

• Mooring buoys	• Bulkheads
• Day-docks	• Dockside utilities
• Navigational aids (channel markers, buoys, directional information)	• Retaining walls
• Transient slips (slips that boaters with recreational vessels occupy for no more than 15 consecutive days)	• Recycling and trash receptacles
• Safe harbors for transient	• Dockside electric service
• Floating docks and fixed piers	• Dockside water supplies
• Floating and fixed breakwaters	• Dockside pay telephones
• Dinghy docks	• Debris deflection booms
• Restrooms	• Marine fueling stations

All facilities constructed under this program must:

- Limit use of overnight docks and moorings to eligible boats that are 26 feet or more in length staying no more than 15 consecutive days; vessels under 26; can use the facilities for day use, if available
- Serve its intended purpose for its useful life as originally proposed or as extended, except in the case of a catastrophic event
- Clearly designate eligible users and inform the public of restrictions
- Offer security, safety, and service for eligible users and vessels
- Be open and accessible to eligible vessels on navigable waters that are at least 6 feet deep at the lowest tide or fluctuation, unless you can show that the facility will still serve its intended purpose for typical eligible users that visit that location
- Be open to the general public
- Provide pumpout service or be located within two miles of a publicly accessible pumpout facility
- Be used for the original stated grant purpose throughout the useful life of the project
- Maintained throughout their useful life

Useful Life:
Each applicant must estimate the useful life in years of each capital improvement for the proposed project. A capital improvement is typically a structure that costs at least $25,000 to build, or a repair or renovation of a structure costing at least $25,000 that increase the structure's useful life by 10 years or more. If awarded funds, you will be required to explain how you estimated the useful life of each capital improvement. You must reference a generally accepted method used to determine useful life of a capital improvement; however, your estimates do not need to be certified by a licensed engineer or other professional. You may be required to revise or adjust useful life estimates during the approval process.

Conditions
Facilities that participate in the program must allow the feature(s) constructed under the BIG Program to be open to the general public and provide access to shore along with other existing basic features of the facility such as fuel, pumpouts, and restrooms. Some type of reservation system must also be available to ensure boaters space when they arrive. Access to other non-funded features of the facility is not required. Vessels under 26' may use the facilities for day use if available.

Projects are ineligible for funding if the proposed activities include:

- Activities or construction that does not provide a benefit to the public
- Law enforcement patrols
- Law enforcement activities against the applicant (i.e. un-permitted structures)
- Law enforcement violations (i.e. operations without permits)
- Degradation of valuable natural resources or cultural or historic nature of the area
- Routine, custodial and/janitorial maintenance activities (those that occur regularly on an annual or more frequent basis)
- Acquire land or any interest in land
- Construct, renovate, or maintain roads or parking lots, except those that are damaged from as a direct result of BIG-funded construction
- Construct, renovate, or maintain shops, stores, food service or other retail businesses, lodging, facility administration or management
- Purchase or operate service boats to transport boaters to and from mooring areas
- Purchase supplies and other expendable personal property not directly related to achieving the project objectives
- Construction of slips for long term rental (more than 15 days)
- Construction of boat launch facilities, dry land storage or haul out facilities

Who is eligible to apply?
BIG Program funds are available to public and private agencies and marinas and other facilities that provide transient tie-up opportunities for recreational boats 26' or over in length.

Where do funds come from?
Each state can participate in the BIG Program, which is funded through the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act and administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is the administering entity in Connecticut. Authorized by Congress during the summer of 1988, funds come from the Sport Fish Restoration Account of the Aquatic Resources (Wallop Breaux) Trust Fund. This Trust Fund is contained within the Highway Trust and was reauthorized under the Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act of 2005. A federal rule change was approved on May 6, 2015. The funds result from a Federal excise tax on fishing equipment, trolling motors, import duties on boats and motorboat fuels.

How are funds awarded?
All funds are awarded to an appropriate State Agency. For Connecticut, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Boating Division is designated as the administering entity for the BIG Program. The DEEP encourages local units of government and private facilities to participate in this program by submitting grant requests for transient facilities to the DEEP's Boating Division. Applicants will be notified if their project was not selected at the State level to go to the Federal level. States are generally notified by January of each year of grant awards. DEEP will in turn notify remaining applicants of the status. Awarded federal funds can be used to reimburse up to 75% of the approved project costs. The remaining "matching" funds must come from the grant recipient.

Two levels of funding within BIG Program
There are two levels of funding within the Boating Infrastructure Grant Program:

Tier I - State: An annual maximum of $200,000 is available to each applying state under the Tier I - State portion of the BIG Program. However, the Connecticut DEEP is making $190,000 available for these projects; ten thousand dollars goes to administrative costs. Tier I - State is designed for smaller projects that add transient boating infrastructure to the area and compete at the state level. Projects will be selected at a minimum funding level of $30,000 and a maximum of $190,000. Selected projects must still be authorized by USFWS. For Federal guidance, please see: Tier I-State

Tier II - National: The remainder of the BIG Program annual funding (to date $8 million nationally, less whatever is awarded under Tier I - State) is typically awarded to larger projects under Tier II - National. Tier II - National projects that qualify at the state level are then competitively judged at the national level. Top scoring projects are eligible for funding by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
Please note: While both tiers of the BIG Program are very competitive, the level of national competition within Tier II - National is especially high. Successful projects are of a superior nature and are submitted with very thorough applications. To be competitive in Tier II - National, we recommend that even the best projects be submitted with a substantial percentage of matching dollars. We recommend that if you are considering applying for a Tier II - National project that you contact us early in the application process so that we can provide assistance on the details of your application. For Federal guidance, please see: Tier II- National

When can the project begin?
Applicants cannot start a project until they receive notice for the award and enter into formal agreement with DEEP. No reimbursement will be given for any work performed prior to entering into a formal agreement with DEEP and a signed grant agreement with USFWS. The formal agreement is a document signed by the grant recipient, Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and Attorney General. Any costs incurred prior to the full execution of this agreement are the responsibility of the applicant and will not be reimbursed by DEEP. DEEP will send the applicant a completed agreement with a formal letter granting permission to proceed with the project. The DEEP will facilitate the grant agreement with USFWS and will maintain that paperwork.

Design & Construction

The applicant must not award any construction contracts until after plans and specifications are approved by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).The applicant is obliged to cooperate with the Connecticut DEEP in order to ensure that the contractors comply with Equal Employment Opportunity requirements. This includes all bid advertisements. Funded projects must also meet federal ADA requirements for barrier-free access. (See Federal Register 09/03/02) This Federal Register contains information about barrier-free access at boating facilities as well as other design specifications and ADA requirements for boating facilities funded through the DEEP Boating Division, contact: Mike Payton at 860-447-4347.

Compliance

Features proposed under the BIG Program cannot cause damage to the environment not to historic features. If the scope and nature of your project requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) to be completed, it will be the grantee's responsibility to have the EA prepared and approved. All facilities must comply with requirements of the Americans with Disability Act.