


POLICY

Approved by: Mark Ezell, Commissioner	Policy Number: 2018-002
Signature: 	Supersedes: Rev. 3 eff. July 1, 2025
Application: Waterways Accessibility for Tennessee Recreation (“WATR”)	Effective Date: November 1, 2025
Authority: Tenn. Code Ann. §4-3-2206	Rule: N/A

A. Program Overview.

Beginning in 2016, Waterways Accessibility for Tennessee Recreation (“WATR”) was funded as an appropriation for the sole purpose of establishing a grant program to award funds to improve and maintain access to Tennessee’s waterways. In 2025, the General Assembly saw fit based upon the program’s success to render it a recurring program as an earmarked appropriation. The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (“the department”) provides WATR grants to eligible marinas. The WATR grant provides eligible marinas with the opportunity to improve and maintain access to Tennessee’s waterways. Grant funds that are not awarded will remain with the department for use in marketing and advertising Tennessee waterways and outdoor activities. Awards are limited to available funds, as well as the number of requests received. The department may establish a cap on awards each year.

B. Application Process.

An eligible marina must apply in accordance with the timelines and manner stated on the department application instructions page. The application must be completed in its entirety in order to receive consideration. If incomplete upon submission, Applicants will be contacted to submit the outstanding information. Within that communication the applicant will be notified of the timeframe to supply the needed information. If the applicant fails to provide all needed information following the subsequent contact, the application may be disallowed.

C. Grantee selection.

There are two (2) eligibility components, entity and project.

1. **Eligible Marina.** To be eligible a Marina must provide with the application to the department, evidence of registration with the Secretary of State, proof of payment of rent or a water access fee, and property tax assessment invoice for the county in which the marina is located. Proof of payment of rent or a water access fee will not be required if the department is able to verify payment through annual notification from the Tennessee Valley Authority (“TVA”) or Tennessee Army Corps of Engineers (“TACE”). If the annual report from TVA or TACE is not made available to the department then the Marina will be responsible for providing.

Proof of cleared payment may consist of an invoice from the taxing entity along with a canceled check or bank account statement evidencing the draw on funds, a receipt, or an invoice updated to show the payment received and a zero-balance due. Proof of payment must be set out in a clear manner to easily identify payment.

2. Eligible Project.

An Eligible Marina must submit at least one (1) completed project for consideration in conjunction with the application process along with an explanation on how success of the project will be measured. Submitted projects will be reviewed by a panel of at least three (3) department personnel.

Project Considerations:

- Infrastructure projects must enhance the visitors' experience to the marina. Examples of previous projects that were approved include but are not limited to the following: a) additional boats slips; b) additional lighting; and c) building or expanding a restaurant
- Marketing projects are geared towards visitors from at least fifty (50) miles away. Examples of previous projects include insertion orders for magazine advertisements.

Proof of Expenditure. Proof of expenditure must include an itemized invoice for materials/supplies/services with canceled check, (i.e. proof payment has cleared), an invoice showing a zero-balance due, or bill of sale with receipt attached, etc.

D. Award and Post Approval Reporting.

1. Award. Marinas determined eligible based upon fulfillment of criteria from Section C., will be notified of approval along with the contract, including the award. Contract awards are based upon a tiered structure in support of Governor Bill Lee's Executive Order 1. Awards will be redetermined annually derived from the Appalachian Regional Commission, *Distressed Designation and County Economic Status*, and set forward in the department's application and instructions page.

2. Post Approval Reporting. Grantees must submit an Expenditures and Accounting Report within thirty (30) days following the end of the Grant Contract. The report shall be provided electronically through the format assigned by the department and include the following metrics:

- Before and after photographs of the enhancement project site. Photographs must be in .jpg. or .png file formats. Photographs in .heic (live photo format) will not be accepted. If the project was marketing/advertising then a digital copy of the advertisement, etc. must be submitted.
- Written summary of enhanced visitor experience with performance metrics. For example:
 - Marina built three (3) new boat slips, which allowed the marina to book 300 additional boats during the season for an increase in revenue totaling \$X.
 - Marina advertised in a new location, ex. Atlanta. Marina received twenty (20) bookings from Atlanta residents for an increase in revenue totaling \$X from this new market.

If a Grantee fails to submit the report within the prescribed timeline, any subsequent application for the WATR program may not receive the full amount of the eligible award.