

## MSL / NRIS Funding Source Summary

### NAC Discussion Document

March 22, 2006

NRIS/NHP funding is a complex mix of General Fund, RIT, and agency direct pass-through, supplemented through interagency agreements with state and federal agencies, grants, and through other sources.

#### NRIS “Core” Funding – HB 2 Appropriation

MSL often refers to NRIS’ House Bill 2 funding – including the General Fund allotment, RIT allotment, and funding passed through from selected agencies - as “core” funding. Core funding is used to maintain the Information System and provide a basic set of products, services, and expertise to governmental agencies, universities, private business, organizations, and the public, including:

- Website management and update – NRIS offers comprehensive access to its information holdings via the Internet, including a map library, interactive mapping and reporting applications, field guides for Montana’s native plant and animal species, and download capabilities for files used by GIS professionals.
- Database/file system administration – Most of the information contained within the NRIS clearinghouse is electronic in nature - stored in databases and file systems requiring ongoing administration.
- Data update – NRIS inventories, assimilates, catalogs, and provides widespread access to natural resource data for the State of Montana. NRIS performs routine updates of these datasets in order to keep them current.
- Coordination with agencies who produce and use NRIS information – NRIS currently houses information produced by twelve state and eleven federal agencies. NRIS staff routinely meet with representatives of these agencies to discuss and develop data sharing agreements. In addition, NRIS staff serve on various state committees for the purpose of promoting access to public data and information.
- Biological information – NRIS’ Natural Heritage Program operates the state’s clearinghouse for information on the status and distribution of native animals and plants, emphasizing species of concern and high quality habitats such as wetlands. Information is integrated from a broad array of agencies, publications, and knowledgeable individuals. This program had been operated through a contract with The Nature Conservancy for over 20 years. The University of Montana will soon assume administration of the program from The Nature Conservancy.
- Outreach and training of users in the use of NRIS information discovery and access systems – NRIS staff routinely conduct seminars and provide training to ensure that users are knowledgeable of NRIS information resources and able to use them effectively.
- Response to user requests – Although most NRIS information dissemination is accomplished via the Internet, NRIS staff members are available to respond to requests that require staff consultation and assistance.
- Computer network maintenance and administration – As an electronic information source, NRIS relies on a complex information technology infrastructure.
- Program administration and administrative support.

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Contract/Grant Funding

In addition to the program core functions funded through HB 2, NRIS leverages these core funds through contracts with partners, primarily state and federal agencies, in order to assist these agencies in meeting their information access, management and dissemination needs, and to further support overall accomplishment of the NRIS mission.

The work performed through these contracts is done at the request of state and federal agencies. Completing the work through NRIS provides the following benefits to Montana State Library/NRIS and to the state of Montana:

- These contracts take advantage of the professional expertise and information technology infrastructure within NRIS to reduce the overall cost of the work to Montana taxpayers.
- Data developed through the contracts are stored and managed by MSL and are integrated with library resources so they are readily available to all information users. The relationships developed via contracts often result in the acquisition of new datasets for the NRIS clearinghouse, or the improvement of previously acquired datasets.
- Products or tools (e.g. web interfaces) developed through the contracts become available for use on other projects, including NRIS core projects and other agency initiatives.
- NRIS is often able to leverage the funding from several funding sources to accomplish work that could not otherwise be completed.
- The additional staff hired through NRIS to meet these needs provides NRIS additional depth of knowledge and expertise not able to be supported through core funding alone.
- The additional staff also provide back-up for selected positions of primary importance, ensuring that the loss of a single staff member will not result in the total loss of necessary expertise in a critical area.

The work completed through these contracts and grants, while supporting the NRIS mission, is beyond the scope of the work that could be accomplished through HB 2 funding alone.

Contract/Grant examples:

<b>Agency / Title</b>	<b>Description</b>
Fish, Wildlife, and Parks – Information access support	Provide support for public access to FWP information.
Dept of Justice - Natural Resource Damage Program – Information access support	Natural Resource Damage Program mapping and data access support.
Department of Public Health and Human Services – Project support	Assist in the development of an Environmental Public Health Tracking System

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Department of Environmental Quality – Resource Protection – Mapping and analysis	Assist in the development of maps of electricity and natural gas pipelines, renewable resources, and transmission corridors.
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation – Application development	Provide support for public access to DNRC’s water rights information.
Department of Environmental Quality – Remediation – Application development	Provide support for public access to DEQ’s Remediation data.
DEQ - Wetlands Assessment, Red Rocks watershed	Part of a larger collaborative project to develop bioassessment protocols for wetland vegetation as a component of DEQ’s comprehensive wetland monitoring and assessment program.
MDT – Bat use of highway bridge structures	Collection, analysis and integration of data on related to the use of highway bridge structures by bat species, to support MDT in management and planning activities.
BLM - Broad scale assessment	Assemble and integrate data on sensitive species and habitats in readily accessible spatial and tabular formats to support BLM planning activities.
USFS - Helena NF Wetlands	Conduct wetland inventory and assessment for selected sites on the Lincoln Ranger District.
FWS – Focus Areas Initiative	Provide support for the collection, integration and analysis of data to assist the USFWS in program planning and geographic prioritization.

“Supplemental Core” Funding

NHP has been successful in obtaining limited funding from several state and federal agencies that in effect supplements core funding, by supporting specific core products and services of particular value to those agencies. Although some of these agencies have been able to continue this funding over a period of years, this funding stream cannot be considered to be secure.

Core Funding Agency Pass-through Assessment:

The amount of core funding to be provided from each of the five source agencies was determined in 1999, based on a target amount of funding needed and an examination of agency utilization of NRIS services at that time. However, because NRIS services are primarily web-based, and because of the difficulty in assessing web utilization from any particular use sector, the formula used was admittedly questionable then, and would be even more difficult to apply today. The five source agencies have not requested a re-assessment of their assigned funding levels until this year. The methodology to apply to a reassessment has not yet been determined.

The funding provided as pass-through from the five source agencies has remained constant for three biennia, and is summarized in the following table:

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**NRIS Core Level (HB0002) Funding Sources**

Source	FY 06	FY 07	Total
General Fund	100,868	100,868	201,736
RIT	391,436	391,436	782,872
FW&P	69,389	69,389	138,778
DOT	31,845	31,845	63,690
DEQ	88,928	88,928	177,856
DNRC	49,155	49,155	98,310
UNIV	44,253	44,253	88,506
			567,140
Total Biennium Budget			1,551,748