Major Storm Recovery Fund (MSRF) Application Guidelines

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The Major Storm Recovery Fund was created to ensure that VMBA, as an organization, has access to the financial resources to bring a trail network back online quickly in the wake of an extreme weather event. The VMBA office has also developed a Major Storm Recovery Plan (MSRP) to assist Chapters in preparing their own plans and responding to such an event. This fund was explicitly not created to cover normal maintenance projects or new trail construction. Requests for funding are to be submitted to the Advisory Council (see below), who will determine how much funding, if any, to make available.

What constitutes Major Storm Damage?
What constitutes "major damage" can vary. In some cases, it will be the cost associated with acute damage and for others it will be the extent of trails damaged in a network. For example, if a major culvert or bridge was washed out and destroyed, it may be comparable in impact to a large segment of trail needing to be rebuilt. Conversely, substantial blowdown throughout a trail network may require contracted salvage logging to remove debris. The overarching commonality is significant expenses beyond expected trail maintenance.

Where do the funds come from?

As part of it's annual fundraising campaign, VMBA encourages members to donate directly to the Major Storm Recovery Fund. In cases where available Trail Grant funds exceed that requested from Chapters in a given year, excess funds *might* also be directed to the Major Storm Recovery Fund, following approval by the Advisory Council. Approximately $7,900 was in the Fund as of July, 2021.

Guidelines

1. Requests for funds should only cover clear one-time costs in excess of typical maintenance following a major storm (e.g. not for tools or recurring costs).
2. Funds should be used for the purposes of bringing a trail or trail network back online and/or restoring a trail following an unforeseen weather event.
3. Applications should include some indication of why the event was catastrophic and exceeded the trail's ability to stay within maintenance tolerances (e.g. not a result of poor drainage).
4. Qualifying contracted expenses include: salvage logging, machine rental, replacement materials, and trail design and/or building.

5. No more than 50% of the Fund may be distributed for any one application, which may limit full funding of projects; Applicants may contact the Chapter Reps prior to submitting an application to understand how much funding is available.
6. Mindful that full funding may not be available, Chapters should consider how partial grants might be allocated and contribute to bringing trails back online.
7. To the extent possible, Chapters should seek alternate sources of funding if available, knowing the Major Storm Recovery Fund is a limited resource.

Process

1. As described in the Major Storm Recovery Plan, the Chapter should engage the local land owner/manager and conduct a full assessment of trail damage.
2. The Chapter should prepare a map of the affected trails and specific damage, along with a complete cost estimate for bringing the trail(s) back online, covering only that work which is in direct response to responding to storm damage.
3. The Chapter should attach the cost estimate to a short (1-2 page) written application that addresses the following questions:
    a. Which trails were affected, and to what extent?
    b. Could the trail have been designed/built to better withstand the event?
    c. How much will it cost to bring each trail back online, and what specific activities are required?
    d. Which third party contractors will be engaged, if any, and for what?
    e. How long will it take to execute the response?
4. The Chapter should then submit the brief written application and cost estimate to the VMBA Chapter Reps (chapterreps@vmba.org), with a copy to the Executive Director, along with an indication of when they would be available for a hearing with the Advisory Council.
5. The Chapter Reps will then convene an emergency meeting of the Advisory Council as soon as a quorum (simple majority) can be confirmed and distribute the Chapter's application for review in advance of the meeting.
6. The Chapter will present their application to the Advisory Council, who can ask for clarification and additional information and discuss the award amount, based on project need and available funds.
7. Attending Chapters shall then vote (one vote per Chapter) as to whether to fund the request in whatever amount is determined appropriate, with a two-thirds majority being necessary to pass the motion.
8. Should the initial vote not pass, a second motion for a lesser funding amount can be made, which the Chapters shall vote on along the same guidelines (one vote per Chapter, two-thirds majority required).
9. If a funding amount is approved, the VMBA Office will disburse the funds the following business day to the Chapter.