



California Forests and Watersheds Infrastructure Resilience 2020 Request for Proposals

Applicant Webinar ([Register Here](#)): Wednesday, March 25th, 2020 at 1:00 PM Pacific Time
Full Proposal Due Date: Wednesday, April 22nd, 2020, 8:59 PM Pacific Time

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and our federal partner, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), are pleased to announce funding for the California Forests and Watersheds Infrastructure Resilience program. This funding program will remove targeted aquatic organism passage (AOP) barriers. We will also be providing funding for meadow restoration projects.

NFWF and the USFS are providing \$783,000 in funding for watershed infrastructure restoration projects that will strengthen watershed resilience, remove targeted fish passage barriers, and improve Forest Service infrastructure. Priority will be given to projects which address anadromous and native fish benefits on the Klamath, Shasta-Trinity, Six Rivers, Lassen, Mendocino, and Los Padres National Forests. There will also be up to \$1 million in funding for meadows restoration projects in areas identified in the Restoration Strategy.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Watershed infrastructure design, permitting, and implementation funding is available for the Klamath, Shasta-Trinity, Six Rivers, Lassen, Mendocino, and Los Padres National Forests (Figure 1). Projects that benefit anadromous fish are strongly encouraged. Eligible watershed infrastructure project types are referenced in Chapter 2 of the [Restoration Strategy](#). The National Forests have identified priority project areas throughout their forests for consideration. Details on the specific needs in each respective forest are included in the RFP Appendix. Implementation ready projects listed in the RFP Appendix will include associated environmental compliance information.

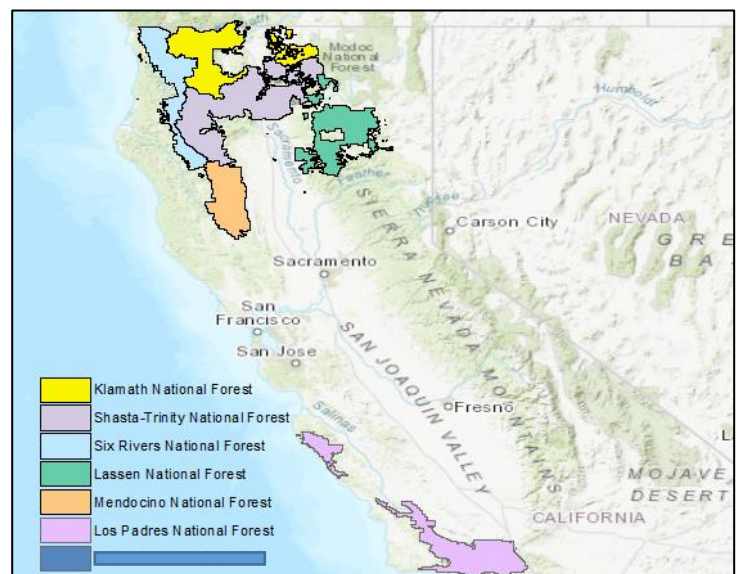


Figure 1. Watershed infrastructure map for the Klamath, Shasta-Trinity, Six Rivers, Lassen, Mendocino, and Los Padres National Forests

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Through active collaboration, NFWF and USFS established a [Restoration Strategy](#) which aims to provide targeted watershed-scale projects to accomplish the highest return on conservation outcomes and return on investments. The California Forests and Watersheds



Infrastructure Resilience program seeks to support the implementation of projects identified in Chapter 2 of the [Restoration Strategy](#).

Grant funding will be awarded to implement restoration projects that will improve aquatic organism passage and associated transportation infrastructure improvements which benefit anadromous and native fish on the Klamath, Shasta-Trinity, Six Rivers, Lassen, Mendocino, and Los Padres National Forests. To be eligible for funding:

- Project must be on the Klamath, Shasta-Trinity, Six Rivers, Lassen, Mendocino, or Los Padres National Forest (Figure 1).
- Transportation infrastructure projects must show a benefit to watershed restoration and recovery or ecosystem improvement.
- Project goals, objectives, and activities must provide a direct and practical contribution toward restoration priorities as mentioned in Chapter 2 of the [Restoration Strategy](#).

In addition, NFWF will continue to administer its Sierra Nevada Meadows funding throughout which benefit watersheds which drain into the Desert Terminal Lakes basins.

Eligible Projects

The USFS and NFWF have design, planning, and implementation funding available for:

- **Watershed Restoration and Management**
These include projects to:
 - 1) Improve hydrologic connectivity and aquatic organism passage;
 - 2) Remove invasive species threatening aquatic habitat and/or listed species;
 - 3) Restore and/or enhance instream flow, and;
 - 4) Create, maintain and/or improve existing watersheds, meadows, fens, riparian corridors, and instream habitats.
- **Watershed Infrastructure Improvements and Management**
This strategy includes projects to manage and improve watershed infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and drainage features. Projects proposed must be able to illustrate a benefit to watershed restoration and recovery or ecosystem improvement.

Projects may include:

- 1) Maintenance, replacement, and/or improvement to roads, bridges, culverts, and drainage features;
- 2) Installation of drainage features such as culverts, drainage dips, and other associated drainage features;
- 3) Decommissioning transportation infrastructure that has a deleterious impact on watershed health and/or human health and safety;
- 4) Implementing strategic restoration projects in response to, and in anticipation of, extreme weather and storm events, and;



- 5) Maintenance and improvements of existing transportation infrastructure to increase accessibility to fuels reduction and native vegetation projects.

All bridge and other road structure designs and construction implementation will be communicated and reviewed by the FS Regional Office and National Forest. Road structure projects may include bridges, open bottom arches, retaining walls over 6' in height, and any other structure requiring structural engineering on National Forest roads and lands.

Applicants may submit more than one proposal; however, each proposal submitted should have only one National Forest focus (i.e., if you will submit proposals for LNF, KNF, STNF, SRNF, MNF, and LPNF projects, then you should submit separate proposals for each individual National Forest).

MEADOWS RESTORATION

Up to \$1 million in grant funding will also be available for meadow restoration implementation projects designed to advance meadow restoration or resilience within the California Sierra Nevada meadows range that drain into the Desert Terminal Lakes basins.

The Sierra Nevada meadows priority is to restore and protect mountain meadow ecosystems which serve as key habitat for fish and wildlife and provide hydrological benefits for people, such as increased groundwater storage, flow reliability, and reduced sedimentation. The goal of the Sierra Nevada meadows funding is to restore habitat and validate restoration benefits.

To be eligible for funding, projects must occur within California's Sierra Nevada meadows region and benefit the Desert Terminal Lakes basins, on public or private lands (Figure 2). While a mixed portfolio of projects is possible, preference will be given to projects that will advance recovery of key focal species, specifically, California spotted owl, willow flycatcher, Yosemite toad, and native trout including Lahontan cutthroat trout. In addition, projects that are adjacent to, or contiguous with, previously restored meadows are of particular interest.

Competitive proposals will address the conservation and restoration of meadows and benefit the fish and wildlife that depend on this habitat as described Chapter 1 of the [Restoration Strategy](#). Additional information can be found through NFWF's Sierra Nevada Meadow Restoration Business Plan. Strategies must include measurable outcomes and may include projects for:

- Implementing meadow restoration using a variety of innovative methods;
- Implementing meadow restoration and associated monitoring to quantify hydrological benefits through changes in streamflow volume and groundwater storage;
- Implementing meadow restoration and associated monitoring and surveys to quantify species benefits including, but not limited to, increases in population abundance;
- Engaging local communities and diverse stakeholders in meadow restoration, and;
- Improving watershed health through meadow restoration that complements and/or amplifies restoration of fire scars on National Forests.



Figure 2. California Meadow Restoration Projects must benefit the [Desert Terminal Lakes](#) basins.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

Grant recipients will be required to demonstrate the ability to fulfill the Program’s contractual requirements to acquire applicable permissions and to ensure environmental and heritage resource compliance, as well as any regulatory permits or approvals, including National Environmental Policy Act¹ (NEPA) requirements. Regulatory permitting and compliance measures should be included in the proposal budget and timeline. NEPA, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), permitting and other relevant regulatory development can be included within the proposal request if applicable to the project.

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the California Forests and Watersheds Infrastructure Resilience program has a list of metrics in Easygrants for full proposal applicants to choose from for future reporting. We ask that applicants select only the most relevant metrics from this list for their project (all possible program metrics are shown in the table below). If you think an applicable

¹ NEPA compliance may require significant time and resources to complete. Projects that propose on-the-ground actions for which NEPA processes have not yet been completed may consider including NEPA tasks within their overall project scope. Projects where NEPA tasks are expected should be discussed with NFWF’s Jessica Perla prior to submitting a proposal to evaluate implications to scope, budget, and timelines.



metric has not been provided, please contact Jonathan Birdsong (Jonathan.Birdsong@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Project Activity	Project Metrics	Additional Guidance
Fish passage improvements	Fish passage improvements - # passage barriers rectified	Enter the number of fish passage barriers rectified. In the notes section, state the number and types of barriers rectified (i.e. dam, culvert, etc).
Fish passage improvements	Fish passage improvements - Miles of stream opened	Enter the number of miles of stream opened.
Instream restoration	Instream restoration - # structures installed	Enter the number of habitat structures installed, replaced, upgraded or repaired for improvement of watershed restoration and recovery or ecosystem improvement.
Instream restoration	Instream restoration - Miles restored	Enter the number of miles restored that will enhance instream restoration flow.
Riparian restoration	Riparian restoration - Miles restored	Enter the number of miles restored.
Land, wetland restoration	Land, wetland restoration - Acres restored	Enter the number of wetland/meadows acres restored. Acres involving invasive removal should not be included in this metric, and instead, should be included in the removal of invasives metric. Riparian acres should not be included in this metric, and instead, should be included in the riparian restoration metric.
Restoring hydrology	Restoring hydrology - Acres with restored hydrology	Enter the number of acres with restored hydrology. Acres involving wetland restoration should not be included here and instead be in the land, wetland acres restoration metric.
Removal of invasives	Removal of invasives - Acres restored	Enter the number of acres restored. Only list invasive removal acres that are not already listed in the land/wetland acres metric.



NFWF



Improved management practices	Improved management practices - Acres under improved management	Enter the number of acres under improved management except for those treated specifically for the benefit of California spotted owl. In the notes section, state how many acres are wetland/meadow, riparian, land, and/or other specific type and are not listed in the land/wetland acres metric. If applicable, state how many acres are for improved campsites, or for fuels reduction activities such as mechanical thinning, etc., but do not include acres from the prescribed burns.
Treatment to improve/protect habitat important for California Spotted Owl	California spotted owl - Improved management practices - Acres under improved management	Enter the numbers of acres treated for the primary benefit of California spotted owl. Indicate the type of treatment(s), why the area was chosen for fuels management and how the treated area will protect California spotted owl habitat.
BMP implementation for prescribed burns	BMP implementation for prescribed burns - Acres public land burned	Enter the number of acres of public lands that have been treated by prescribed burning.
BMP implementation for road improvements	BMP implementation for road improvements - Miles of road improved, maintained or decommissioned	Enter the number of miles of roads improved, maintained, or decommissioned that will improve watershed infrastructure. In the notes section, state how many miles of road are improved, maintained, and/or decommissioned and how it will improve watershed infrastructure.
Green Infrastructure	Green Infrastructure - miles trails developed/improved	Enter the number of miles of trails developed or improved.
Management or Governance Planning	Management or Governance Planning - # plans developed	Enter the number of plans developed that had input from multiple stakeholders.
Management or Governance Planning	Management or Governance Planning - # studies used to inform mgmt	Enter the number of studies completed whose findings are used to adapt management/ inform management decisions.



Restoration planning/design/permitting	Restoration planning/design/permitting - Acres restored	Enter the number of acres for which planning, design, or permitting activities are being conducted under this project.
Volunteer participation	Volunteer participation - # volunteers participating	Enter the number of volunteers participating in projects.
Seed harvesting	Seed harvesting - lbs harvested	Enter the number of pounds of seeds collected. In the notes section, state how many different native species are included.
Plant cultivation	Plant cultivation - # seedlings propagated	Enter the number of seedlings propagated. In the notes section, state how many different native species are included.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Indian tribes, and educational institutions.
- Ineligible applicants include U.S. Federal government agencies, businesses, unincorporated individuals, and international organizations. Ineligible applicants are welcome to partner with eligible applicants.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- NFWF funds and matching contributions may not be used to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.
- NFWF funds may not be used to support ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements, including permit conditions, mitigation and settlement agreements. However, grant funds may be used to support projects that enhance or improve upon existing baseline compliance efforts.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH

The California Forests and Watersheds Infrastructure Resilience program aims to award approximately \$783,000 for watershed infrastructure design, permitting, and implementation projects with a particular emphasis on AOP for anadromous fish benefits within Klamath, Shasta-Trinity, Six Rivers, Lassen, Mendocino, and Los Padres National Forests. Grants can range from \$25,000 to \$400,000 per project. Project costs must be approved and expended within the project’s start and end date. Projects are expected to be completed by February 2, 2024.



Up to \$1 million in grant funding will also be available for meadow restoration implementation projects designed to advance meadow restoration or resilience within the California Sierra Nevada meadows range that drain into the Desert Terminal Lakes basins. Please contact Jonathan Birdsong for consideration of projects that are more than the grant range or outside of the expected completion date.

Non-Federal Match

Matching contributions must be relevant to the project's work and used during the project's start and end date. Non-federal match may include local, state, public or private non-federal cash, in-kind contributions of staff and volunteer time, work performed, materials and services donated, or other tangible contributions to the project objectives and outcomes. Eligible indirect costs that are not being requested within the project's requested grant funding may be applied as non-federal match. Please review the NFWF [Indirect Cost Policy for Applicants](#) for specific information about using indirect costs as match.

Non-federal matching funds are required and will be a factor in the proposal evaluation.

- Watershed restoration and management; and infrastructure improvements and management projects are expected to provide 1:1 non-federal match and the strongest implementation projects will meet or exceed a 1:1 non-federal match. Watershed infrastructure design and permitting projects are expected to provide at least 50% non-federal match.
- Sierra Nevada meadow projects are required to provide 1:1 non-federal match.
- Relevant non-federal matching funds do not need to be fully secured prior to proposal submission, but should have a demonstrable likelihood of being secured and expended during the project period to ensure the project can be completed as proposed. Proposals not meeting the match expectations will be considered on a limited case-by-case basis and are still encouraged to apply. Please contact Jonathan Birdsong to discuss possible non-federal match sources and/or if there are match concerns.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with NFWF and funding source policies. Proposals will then be evaluated based on the extent to which they meet the following criteria.

Program Goals and Priorities - Project contributes to the Program's overall habitat and species conservation goals as described in the RFP and Chapter 2 of the [Restoration Strategy](#), and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities.

Technical Merit – Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan and timeline. Project engages appropriate technical experts



throughout project planning, design and implementation to ensure activities are technically-sound and feasible.

Cost-Effectiveness – Project includes a cost-effective budget that balances performance risk and efficient use of funds. Cost-effectiveness evaluation may include, but is not limited to, an assessment of either or both direct and indirect costs in the proposed budget. The federal government has determined that a *de minimis* 10% indirect rate is an acceptable minimum for organizations without a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), as such NFWF reserves the right to scrutinize **ALL** proposals with indirect rates above 10% for cost-effectiveness.

Transferability - Project has potential and a plan to transfer lessons learned to other communities or natural resource management applications, particularly among California National Forests, and/or to be integrated into government programs and policies.

Communication - Project includes a detailed plan to communicate information about the project to appropriate audiences including but not limited to peer reviewed and professional publications and meetings.

Funding Need – Project establishes a clear need for the funds being requested and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.

Conservation Plan and Context – The project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy.

Monitoring and Project Documentation - Project includes a plan for monitoring progress before, during, and after the proposed project period to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise. In addition, all projects will be expected to document relevant geospatial data associated with each activity or task performed, which will be delivered as part of the project reporting information provided to NFWF and USFS. Geospatial information will be consistent with established USFS geospatial data standards and format (e.g. data dictionaries, metadata formats). Restoration implementation projects will be required to submit before, during, and after implementation pictures and captions with every programmatic report. All other projects will require pictures and captions when they are available.

Long-term Sustainability – Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. This should include how future funding will be secured to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

Past Success – Applicant has a proven track record of success in implementing conservation practices with specific, measurable results.



Partnership - An appropriate partnership exists to implement the project and the project is supported by a strong local partnership that leverages additional funds and will sustain it after the life of the grant. Identify proposed partners, if known (including potential or contemplated subawards to third party subrecipients of the applicant), the roles they will play in implementing the project, and how this project will build new or enhance existing partnerships. (Note: a project partner is any local community, non-profit organization, tribe, and/or local, state, and federal government agency that contributes to the project in a substantial way and is closely involved in the completion of the project.)

Consistency with Overarching Federal or State Conservation Initiatives - If applicable, proposals may also address goals, priorities, and recommendations in context with broader federal, state, or regional conservation plans or strategies. Proposals should describe specifically how the project aligns with complementary conservation initiatives, and reference appropriate documentation.

OTHER CRITERIA

Budget – Costs are allowable, reasonable and budgeted in accordance with NFWF’s [Budget Instructions](#) cost categories. Federally-funded projects must be in compliance with [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) as applicable. The project budget must accurately reflect the actual costs necessary to complete all elements of the scope of work including any monitoring and environmental compliance costs.

Matching Contributions – Matching Contributions consist of cash, contributed goods and services, volunteer hours, and/or property raised and spent for the Project during the Period of Performance. Larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review.

Procurement – If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by NFWF to the applicant does not constitute NFWF’s express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services noncompetitively. When procuring goods and services, NFWF recipients must follow documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable laws and regulations [including but not limited to 2 CFR 200 (Uniform Guidance)]. Please note that Federal wage provisions (Davis-Bacon or Service Contract Act) are applicable. Davis-Bacon wage rates apply on all public works contracts in excess of \$2,000 and Service Contract Act wage provisions apply to service contracts in excess of \$2,500.

Publicity and Acknowledgment of Support – Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF and USFS the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF and USFS’s financial support for the grant in press releases, publications and other public communications. Recipients must also provide high-resolution photographs (minimum 300 dpi), geospatial data, and project narratives depicting the project.



Receiving Award Funds – Award payments are primarily reimbursable. Projects may request funds for reimbursement at any time after completing a signed agreement with NFWF. A request of an advance of funds must be due to an imminent need of expenditure and must detail how the funds will be used and provide justification and a timeline for expected disbursement of these funds.

Compliance Requirements – Projects selected may be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). Applicants should budget time and resources to obtain the needed approvals. As may be applicable, successful applicants may be required to comply with additional Federal, state or local requirements and obtain all necessary permits and clearances. Projects involving structural engineering such as bridges, open bottom arches, retaining walls over 6’ in height on National Forest roads and lands will be coordinated with FS Regional Office and associated National Forest.

Quality Assurance – If a project involves significant monitoring, data collection or data use, grantees may be asked to prepare and submit quality assurance documentation. Applicants should budget time and resources to complete this task. A Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) template can be located at: <https://www.epa.gov/quality/sampling-and-analysis-plan-guidance-and-template-v4-general-projects-042014>.

Permits – Successful applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation that the project expects to receive or has received all necessary permits and clearances to comply with any Federal, state or local requirements. NFWF strongly encourages applicants to conduct permit pre-application meetings with the appropriate administering agencies prior to submitting their proposal. In some cases, if a permit pre-application meeting has not been completed, NFWF may require successful applicants to complete such a meeting prior to grant award.

Federal Funding – Federally funded projects must operate in compliance with the [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) as applicable to the applicant. The availability of federal funds estimated in this solicitation is contingent upon the federal appropriations process. Funding decisions will be made based on level of funding and timing of when it is received by NFWF.

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information at www.nfwf.org/norcal

Applicant Webinar ([Register Here](#)) March 25th, 2020 at 1:00 PM Pacific Time

Full Proposal Due Date April 22nd, 2020 by 8:59 PM Pacific Time



Review Period April – June 2020

Awards Announced July 2020

HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Easygrants system.

- 1) Go to easygrants.nfwf.org to register in our Easygrants online system. New users to the system will be prompted to register before starting the application (if you already are a registered user, use your existing login). Enter your applicant information. Please disable the pop-up blocker on your internet browser prior to beginning the application process.
- 2) Once on your homepage, click the "Apply for Funding" button and select this RFP's "Funding Opportunity" from the list of options.
- 3) Follow the instructions in Easygrants to complete your application. Once an application has been started, it may be saved and returned to at a later time for completion and submission.

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

A *Tip Sheet* is available for quick reference while you are working through your application.

This document can be downloaded [here](#).

Additional information to support the application process can be accessed on the NFWF website's [Applicant Information](#) page.

For more information or questions about this RFP, please contact:

Jonathan Birdsong
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Jonathan.Birdsong@nfwf.org

Jessica Perla
Coordinator, Regional Programs
Jessica.Perla@nfwf.org
202-595-2422

For issues or assistance with our online Easygrants system, please contact:

Easygrants Helpdesk
Email: Easygrants@nfwf.org



Voicemail: 202-595-2497

Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm ET, Monday-Friday.

Include: Your name, proposal ID #, e-mail address, phone number, program you are applying to, and a description of the issue.