



SOUTHWEST RIVERS HEADWATERS

2020 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar [[Register Here](#)]: **Thursday, June 25th 2020**
at 1:00pm-2:00pm Eastern / 11:00am -12:00pm Mountain

Full Proposal Due Date: Thursday, July 30th 2020
by 11:59pm Eastern / 9:59pm Mountain

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is requesting proposals to restore, protect and enhance aquatic and riparian species of conservation concern and their habitats in the headwaters of the Rio Grande and Gila River watersheds. Up to \$535,000 in funding is expected to be available through support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and private foundations.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS/PROGRAM FUNDING PRIORITIES

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is part of NFWF's Southwest Rivers Program, and will provide funding to projects that produce measureable outcomes for species of conservation concern in the riparian corridors of the headwaters of the Rio Grande and Gila River. The Rio Grande focal area includes the main stem and headwater tributaries of the Rio Grande in Colorado and northern New Mexico, as well as the headwaters of the Rio Chama, Jemez River, and Rio Puerco. This year the Headwaters RFP will also include a new pilot focal area of increasing interest in the Gila River Watershed. The pilot Gila Watershed focal area includes the main stem of the Gila River and headwater tributaries in New Mexico and Arizona upstream of San Carlos Lake, as well as the White and Black Rivers (headwater streams of the Salt River which drain the Mogollon Rim). Priority projects will address the leading factors in aquatic and riparian species decline such as habitat alteration, environmental change and invasive species. Maintaining healthy headwater streams can help store water upstream and provide security for water users, fish and wildlife downstream. Projects benefiting one or more of the following species are priorities for funding.

- Priority species in the Rio Grande focal area include Rio Grande cutthroat trout, Rio Grande chub, Rio Grande sucker and North American beaver.
- Priority species in the pilot Gila Watershed focal area include Apache trout, desert sucker, Chiricahua leopard frog, common black hawk, Gila chub, Gila topminnow, Gila trout, Lewis's woodpecker, loach minnow, narrow-headed garter snake, northern Mexican garter snake, New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, North American beaver, Sonora sucker, Southwestern willow flycatcher and spikedace.

Conservation activities referenced in NFWF’s [Southwest Rivers Business Plan](#) will be most competitive.



Figure 1. Southwest Rivers Headwaters focal areas

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

Priority restoration activities that address key limiting factors for focal species in the Rio Grande and Gila headwaters region include:

Riparian habitat restoration and enhancement – Restore stream banks to increase floodplain connectivity and recruitment of native riparian vegetation. Activities may include streambank re-contouring and native vegetation planting, and grants may support engineering design and analysis for riparian restoration projects.

Instream restoration and enhancement – Restore and enhance stream channels that have suffered from channelization, thereby restoring the natural variety of stream substrate and flow patterns that benefit the life cycles of the priority species. Specific activities may include stream channel engineering and bank re-shaping.

Increase water availability for species and their habitats and/or remove barriers to flow
 – Make available more water for environmental flows that are necessary to sustain species and their habitats through voluntary leasing or acquisition of water rights in the focal geographies. Remove or improve infrastructure at road crossings, culverts and check dams that act as barriers to the movement of aquatic species to ensure habitat connectivity.

Reintroduction and translocation of focal species– Translocation of priority aquatic species to stream reaches with improved habitat and protection from invasive species. Reintroduction of North American beaver in a manner compatible with ongoing agricultural use and irrigation and public land management objectives, and which benefits other priority species dependent on the habitat created by beaver ponds.

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grant projects, the Southwest Rivers Program has a list of metrics in Easygrants for full proposal applicants to choose from for reporting (commonly used metrics are shown in the table below). We ask that you select the most relevant metrics from this list for your project. If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact Kirstin Neff (Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Water acquisitions or leases	Habitat Conservation – Acre feet of water leased	Enter the acre feet of water leased
Fish passage improvements	Habitat Restoration - # passage barriers rectified	Enter the number of fish passage barriers rectified
Fish passage improvements	Habitat Restoration – Miles of stream opened	Enter the number of miles of stream opened
Restore stream geomorphology to increase aquatic species habitat	Habitat Restoration – Miles restored	Enter instream miles restored for priority species
Remove invasive species that threaten target fish species	Habitat Restoration – Miles restored	Enter stream miles from which invasive species threatening priority species are removed
Reconnect floodplain and reestablish native riparian vegetation	Habitat Restoration – Acres restored	Enter the number of acres restored
Installation of livestock exclusion fencing to protect riparian habitat	Habitat Management – Miles of fencing installed	Enter miles of fencing installed to improve habitat for priority species
Engage landowners regarding beaver introduction or engage other stakeholders regarding conservation actions	Capacity, Outreach, Incentives - # people reached	Enter the number of people reached by outreach, training, or technical assistance activities
Volunteer participation	Capacity, Outreach, Incentives - #	Enter the number of volunteers

	volunteers participating	participating in projects
Installation of barriers to prevent the migration of invasive aquatic species	Species-specific Strategies - # barriers created	Enter the number of barriers constructed to protect populations of priority species
Translocation of beaver for reintroduction and riparian habitat restoration	Species-specific Strategies - # translocated/stocked	Enter the number of beaver translocated in the course of the project
Conduct translocation projects for target native fish species	Species-specific Strategies - # translocations and/or social attraction projects	Enter the number of reintroduction projects for priority species
Expand species monitoring to new and additional sites	Planning, Research, Monitoring - # sites being monitored	Enter the # sites being monitored

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Entities

Eligible applicants include: local, state, federal, and tribal governments and agencies (e.g., townships, cities), special districts (e.g., acequias, conservation districts, planning districts, utility districts), non-profit 501(c) organizations, schools and universities.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- Funds from this program cannot support fee title land acquisition projects. However, funds may cover certain transaction costs associated with an acquisition (appraisals, title searches, surveys).
- 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

Up to \$535,000 in grant funds is available. We anticipate making 4-6 grant awards in this cycle.

Applicants must provide at least \$1 in non-federal matching funds for every \$1 of NFWF grant funds requested. Eligible matching sources can include cash, in-kind donations, and/or volunteer labor which are directly related to the project proposed for funding. Applicants must distinguish between federal and non-federal matching fund sources.

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, and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities.

- **Project Need:** Describe the relevance of the project for conservation of the focal species, and its relationship to any prioritization process, species conservation plan or watershed restoration plan. Proposals that effectively communicate the context for the project, in terms of how it fits into a broader restoration effort and why it addresses the most strategic need, will be the most competitive. Please provide this context within the proposal.
- **Activities/Methods:** Describe how each activity will be implemented and the anticipated timeline. Explain how these activities address the key limiting factors the focal species. Describe how these activities relate to established plans and conservation needs. Discuss how this project either initiates or fits into larger efforts in the watershed, or, if this is a stand-alone project, how it will succeed in and of itself in restoring, protecting, or enhancing the species population(s).
- **Long-Term Conservation Outcome(s):** Discuss the quantifiable/measurable long-term outcome(s) for habitat or populations that will be achieved, including how the project will enhance resilience to changing environmental conditions in native aquatic populations. Describe how the project helps achieve the goals described in the Rio Grande focal geography of the Southwest Rivers Business Plan.

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 NICRA, as such NFWF reserves the right to scrutinize **ALL** proposals with indirect rates above 10% for cost-effectiveness.

Transferability – Project has potential and plan to transfer lessons learned to other communities 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.

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 – Project includes a plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise.

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.) *If the project has any nexus with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USFS, Bureau of Land Management, and/or tribal lands or trust resources, please discuss their involvement in the project and request a letter of support from the appropriate office.*

OTHER

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.

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.

Publicity and Acknowledgement of Support – Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF’s financial support for the grant in press releases, publications and other public communications. Recipients may also be asked by NFWF to provide high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) photographs 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), Wilderness Act 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.

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. Where projects involve work in the waters of the United States, NFWF strongly encourages applicants to conduct a permit pre-application meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers 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 – 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 [Southwest Rivers Program page](#) of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information.

Applicant Webinar [Register here]	June 25, 2020, 1:00pm-2:00pm EST/ 11:00am -12:00pm MST
Full Proposal Due Date	July 30, 2020, 11:59pm EST/ 9:59pm MST
Review Period	August – October 2020
Awards Announced	Early November 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:

Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org, 303-222-6485

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.