



## **FIVE STAR AND URBAN WATERS RESTORATION GRANT PROGRAM**

### **2021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

Full Proposal Due Date: **January 28, 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

### **OVERVIEW**

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC), in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), USDA Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), FedEx, Southern Company and BNSF Railway are pleased to solicit applications for the 2021 Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration program. This program will award approximately \$1.5 million in grants nationwide.

The Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration grant program seeks to develop community capacity to sustain local natural resources for future generations by providing modest financial assistance to diverse local partnerships focused on improving water quality, watersheds and the species and habitats they support.

Projects include a variety of ecological improvements along with targeted community outreach, education and stewardship. Ecological improvements may include one or more of the following: wetland, riparian, forest and coastal habitat restoration; wildlife conservation, community tree canopy enhancement, water quality monitoring and green infrastructure best management practices for managing run-off.

Projects should increase access to the benefits of nature, reduce the impact of environmental hazards and engage local communities, particularly underserved communities, in project planning, outreach and implementation. This program expects that applicants will represent a mixture of urban and rural communities. NFWF may use a mix of public and private funding sources to support any grant made through this program.

### **GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS**

Grants for this program are available nationwide, but additional funding is available for the geographic priorities listed in the Funding Availability section of this RFP.

## **PROGRAM PRIORITIES**

Proposals should address at least one bullet under **each** of the five following bolded priorities.

### **On-the-Ground Restoration**

Projects must restore and/or create wetlands, coastal or riparian areas

- Address key species and habitats and link directly to established watershed and conservation plans, including establishment of urban wildlife corridors, fisheries and daylighting of streams.
- Address stressors through restoration techniques and green infrastructure practices that manage stormwater and rural run-off and link directly to stormwater management plans, source water protection plans and water supply planning efforts<sup>1</sup> or demonstrate the linkage between restoration and stormwater management and the quality, quantity and safety of local water and waterways
- Collect and analyze local waterway samples that could be used to determine the effectiveness of current stream/wetland restoration and green infrastructure efforts and inform future planning and decision-making
- Develop/implement trash and litter prevention programs designed to keep urban waterways and riverfronts clean
- Develop public open spaces, create or enhance community parks, improve and protect community tree canopy, enhance brownfield sites beyond required remediation

### **Environmental Outreach, Education & Training**

Projects must integrate meaningful outreach, education and/or training into the proposed on-the-ground activities that advance local watershed and conservation goals

- Engage the public – particularly youth – in hands-on, outdoor conservation experiences that build awareness of the importance of protecting and recovering priority and/or at risk species and habitats and promote stewardship
- Engage communities in restoration at public areas – such as schools, parks, birding trails and more – for public health and recreation
- Establish or advance a community science or water quality monitoring program that involves community members and/or addresses community water quality priorities<sup>2</sup>
- Improve understanding of damaging trash and litter impacts in local waterways that affect community health and local economies

### **Community Partnerships**

Projects must involve five or more partners (public and private entities) including the applicant

- Directly engage a diverse group of community partners to achieve ecological and specific educational outcomes including partnerships among upstream and downstream communities

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<sup>1</sup> Green infrastructure Best Management Practices may include increasing urban tree canopy, water harvesting and use (cisterns), bioswales, permeable pavements/pavers, bioretention, green roofs, downspout disconnection, installation of native vegetation and other proven practices for water quality, habitat and species protection and restoration.

<sup>2</sup> Eligible activities include water quality and/or habitat surveys, bird surveys, monitoring efforts that involve the collection, assessment, analysis and communication of water quality data (existing or new) to identify areas of concern

- Demonstrate that the project will advance existing local watershed or conservation plans and/or propose to foster and coordinate a diverse stakeholder partnership that develops and/or implements new plans
- Identify plans to provide training, partnership meetings and presentations to build support for the project during and beyond the project period

**Measurable Results**

Projects must result in specific, measurable ecological, educational and community benefits

- Identify measurable activities and metrics which clearly link to watershed and community outcomes
- Document a high level of community engagement to support fish and wildlife habitat, urban and community forestry, water quality-related recreational activities and improve understanding across diverse audiences of how fish and wildlife conservation, clean water and healthy forests contribute to community well-being

**Sustainability**

Projects must include a plan for maintenance and care of the project beyond the grant period

- Describe a commitment to community strength and long-term capacity to remain engaged as partners
- Address any priority and/or at-risk species, habitats or conservation actions identified in State Wildlife Action Plans or other recovery or conservation plans
- Directly connect outcomes to community benefits of watershed restoration such as clean water, public health benefits, local economic development and jobs
- Fulfill or advance priorities identified through local planning efforts, including watershed, disaster and sustainability plans
- Develop restoration and stewardship approaches that contribute to pre and post disaster planning, resiliency of community water assets and link to local hazard mitigation, resilience and/or emergency management plans

**PROJECT METRICS**

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Five Star and Urban Waters program has a list of metrics in Easygrants for grantees to choose from for 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 do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact Chloe Hundelt at [Chloe.Hundelt@nfwf.org](mailto:Chloe.Hundelt@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Land, wetland restoration	# Acres restored	Provide # and type of habitat restored. If different types of habitat restored, provide # acres for each individual type, including wetlands, springs, saltwater marshes and beach

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Recommended Metric</b>	<b>Additional Guidance</b>
		habitat
Removal of invasives	# Acres restored	Provide # acres restored and type of invasive species removed
Restoration planning/design/permitting	# Acres restored	Provide # acres impacted directly by plan
Riparian restoration	# Miles restored	Provide # miles riverbank planted (decimals are acceptable)
Land, wetland restoration	# Trees planted	Identify the type of tree(s) planted, approximate age and caliper of the trees
Best Management Practices implementation for livestock fencing	# Miles of fencing installed	Provide # miles fencing installed
Best Management Practices implementation for stormwater runoff	# Acres with Best Management Practices	Provide # acres managed with Best Management Practices including the type of green infrastructure being implemented
Best Management Practices implementation for stormwater runoff	Volume of stormwater runoff prevented	Provide volume of stormwater captured by new green infrastructure practices including Best Management Practices for stormwater management
Improved management practices	# Acres under improved management	Provide # acres under improved management including Best Management Practices for nutrient and sediment reduction
Building institutional capacity	# of organizations contributing to project goals	Provide # partner organizations Identify each partner's sector (e.g. non-profit, private, local or state government)
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# social media posts	Include platforms and size of target audience

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Recommended Metric</b>	<b>Additional Guidance</b>
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# people targeted	Provide total # of people targeted through email and newsletters
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# people reached	Provide # of people actively engaged through workshops, classes or other demonstrations
Volunteer participation	# volunteers participating	Provide number of community members directly volunteering in project. If volunteers include youth (up to age 18) or veterans, specify # youth or # veterans.
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# of educational signs installed	Enter the number of educational signs installed by project
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# internships or fellowships	Enter the number of people employed as interns or fellows.
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# teachers reached	Provide # of teachers reached through teacher training activities
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# of students reached	Enter the number of students in pre-school-grade 12 engaged. In the notes, identify the grade level(s) for all students reached.
Monitoring	# streams/sites being monitored	Identify the number of sites that will be monitored as part of the project
Other	#lbs of trash or debris removed or prevented from entering waterways	Provide lbs of trash or debris removed from waterways or other restoration sites or expected amount prevented from entering waterways and specify removal or prevention.

## **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: unincorporated individuals, businesses, international organizations and U.S. federal government agencies

### **Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds**

- **Equipment:** Applicants are encouraged to rent equipment where possible and cost-effective or use matching funds to make those purchases. NFWF acknowledges, however, that some projects may only be completed using NFWF funds to procure equipment. If this applies to your project, please contact the program staff listed in this RFP to discuss options.
- 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**

Approximately \$1,500,000 is available nationwide for projects meeting program priorities. There is one round of full proposals annually for this program. Awards range from \$20,000 to \$50,000 with an average size of \$35,000 and 40-50 grants awarded per year. Grants should span 12 to 18 months with a start date in late summer/early fall 2021.

### **There is one application submitted to NFWF for all sources of funding.**

This detailed list of funders is provided to identify areas of the country where additional funds are available and provide information on any funder-specific recommendations that applicants should include in proposals.

### **U.S. EPA Five Star Restoration Training Program**

#### **Funding Available:**

Approximately \$225,000 is available nationwide from EPA to fund projects. These funds are available nationwide, in any size community.

### **Urban Waters Federal Partnership, U.S. EPA and U.S.D.A. Forest Service**

#### **Funding Available:**

Approximately \$360,000 is available from U.S. Forest Service and EPA, through the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, to improve urban water quality, restore riparian habitat and community forests, increase public access to urban waterways and make linkages to municipal flood mitigation and stormwater programs in developed watersheds throughout the United States. Funds are available nationwide for urban areas.

Special consideration will be made for projects which directly advance priorities of the 20 Urban Waters Federal Partnership designated locations and/or engage with or support the local Urban Waters Federal Partnership. Applicants are strongly encouraged to note in the abstract and narrative in which Urban Waters Federal Partnership designated location the project will be located, and/or

how the local UWFP partnership will be engaged in the project. For more information on locations, click here: <https://www.epa.gov/urbanwaterspartners/20-designated-urban-waters-locations>

### **U.S. FWS Urban Programs**

#### **Funding Available:**

Approximately \$315,000 is available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to fund projects that engage urban neighbors and foster a sense of stewardship where there are Service lands or offices nearby (within approximately 25+/- miles).

- \$180,000 of these funds comes from the National Wildlife Refuge System to engage communities in conservation on easily-accessible lands that the Service does not own. Priority will go to projects that improve habitat or access for outdoor recreational experiences, including hunting and fishing. Proposals should demonstrate how the project will meet at least one of the Urban Standards of Excellence for Urban Wildlife Refuges and Partnerships (located at <https://www.fws.gov/urban/soe.php>).
- \$135,000 of these funds comes from the Urban Bird Treaty program and projects should have an emphasis on protecting, restoring and enhancing urban habitats for birds, reducing urban hazards to birds such as through bird-safe building programs while engaging people, especially diverse and youth audiences, in bird conservation, education, recreation and community science activities. Projects supported with this funding do not have to be located in an existing Urban Bird Treaty city; a USFWS sponsor or contact is required. For more information about Urban Bird Treaty Cities, visit <https://www.fws.gov/birds/grants/urban-bird-treaty.php>

### **Southern Company Five Star Restoration Program**

#### **Funding Available:**

Approximately \$250,000 is available from Southern Company and its affiliates to support on-the-ground wetland, riparian, in-stream or coastal habitat conservation and restoration projects in key areas served by its subsidiaries. Priority given to projects that address at-risk species and habitats; address watershed and federal recovery or state wildlife action plans and coordinate with those plan coordinators; and, engage the public – particularly youth – in hands-on, outdoor conservation experiences that build awareness of the importance of protecting and recovering priority species and habitats. In Georgia, projects that take actions to help remove streams from the 303(d) impaired streams in the Atlanta area will be given priority.

#### **Geographic Priorities:**

Southern Company will support high quality projects in the following states:

- **Alabama** (excluding Lauderdale, Colbert, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, Morgan, Jackson and DeKalb counties)
- **Georgia** (excluding Union, Fannin and Towns counties)
- **Illinois** Will, Kendall, DuPage and Kane counties
- **Kansas** Lyon and Osage counties
- **Mississippi** Leake, Neshoba, Kemper, Scott, Newton, Lauderdale, Smith, Jasper, Clarke, Jefferson Davis, Covington, Jones, Wayne, Marion, Lamar, Forrest, Perry, Greene, George, Stone, Pearl River, Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties
- **Oklahoma** Grant and Kay counties
- **Texas** Concho, Crosby, Donley, Floyd and Gray counties
- **Virginia** Chesapeake, Hampton City, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth City, Suffolk and Virginia Beach



- **West Virginia** Greenbrier County
- **Washington** Lewis and Thurston Counties

**FedEx**

**Funding Available:**

Approximately \$300,000 is available from FedEx to support projects in the metropolitan areas listed below. All proposals in these areas must propose a volunteer event for up to 100 local FedEx employees in the project narrative to be considered for funding under this funding source.

**Geographic Priorities:**

These funds will support projects in any of the following metropolitan areas:

<b>Boston, MA</b>	<b>Los Angeles, CA</b>	<b>San Francisco/Oakland, CA</b>
<b>Chicago, IL</b>	<b>Memphis, TN</b>	<b>Seattle, WA</b>
<b>Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX</b>	<b>Akron/Uniontown, OH</b>	<b>New Berlin, WI</b>
<b>Indianapolis, IN</b>	<b>Pittsburgh, PA</b>	<b>Miami, FL</b>
<b>Colorado Springs, CO</b>	<b>Philadelphia, PA</b>	<b>Phoenix, AZ</b>

**BNSF Railway**

**Funding Available:**

Approximately \$40,000 is available from BNSF Railway to support projects in the three cities listed below.

**Geographic Priorities:**

This funding will support high quality projects in the following areas:

<b>Richmond/Oakland/San Francisco Bay Area, CA</b>	<b>Sand Point, ID/Spokane, WA</b>	<b>Greater Seattle Metro Area, WA</b>
<b>Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX</b>		

**MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS**

The ratio of matching contributions offered is considered during the review process, and projects are required to meet or exceed a 1:1 match ratio to be competitive. Matching contributions must be non-federal in nature and may include in-kind contributions of staff and volunteer time, work performed, materials and services donated, cash or other tangible contributions to the project objectives and outcomes. The cost of recent land acquisition or easement may also qualify as match for a project involving work at the acquired site.

Additionally, partner contributions can serve as matching contributions and grantees for this grant program commonly use a large amount of in-kind matching contributions to reach this threshold by utilizing their community partnerships to generate match. **Applicants are highly encouraged to contact NFWF for assistance in determining what qualifies as in-kind or any other matching contribution.**

In addition, if not paid with requested grant funding, indirect costs may be applied as match by an applicant with a federally approved indirect rate.



To be eligible, matching contributions typically must be:

- Not paid by the Federal government under another Federal award
- Verifiable from the grantee's records
- Not included as matching contributions for any other award
- Necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives
- Allowable costs based on the program and funding source guidelines
- Committed directly to the project and used within the period of performance

## **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 Five Star and Urban Waters program's overall engagement, habitat and species conservation goals and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses each of the program priorities.

Proposals should articulate tangible ways projects will become an asset to the community including providing technical assistance, providing pathways for youth employment and community education, conservation, science and recreation.

**Partnerships** – An appropriate partnership of five or more partners 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, 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.)

**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. Project advances an existing drought management, watershed, species or conservation plan/strategy. Proposals should include a clear, direct link between the proposed project to the plans, what entity is in charge of implementing the plan and how the project partners will coordinate results with that entity if not already a project partner.

**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.

## **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 are 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), 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.

**Quality Assurance** – If a project involves significant monitoring, data collection or data use, grantees will be asked to prepare and submit quality assurance documentation ([www.epa.gov/quality](http://www.epa.gov/quality)). Applicants should budget time and resources to complete this task.

**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 program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information [Five Star and Urban Waters](#).

Applicant Webinar	November 18, 2 pm EST <a href="#">Click here to register</a>
Full Proposal Due Date	January 28, 2021, 11:59 pm EST
Review Period	February to July 2021
Awards Announced	Late Summer 2021

## **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](http://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. 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:

Chloe Hundelt  
Coordinator, Community Stewardship  
202-595-2434  
[Chloe.Hundelt@nfwf.org](mailto:Chloe.Hundelt@nfwf.org)

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

Easygrants Helpdesk  
Email: [Easygrants@nfwf.org](mailto: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.