



Coral Reef Conservation Fund 2021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Pre-Proposal Due Date: **Monday, February 1, 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

Full Proposal Due Date: **Monday, April 12, 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) will award grants to improve the health of coral reef systems. Grants will be awarded to reduce land-based sources of pollution, advance coral reef fisheries management, increase capacity for reef-scale restoration and to support management in their efforts to increase the natural recovery and resiliency of coral reef systems.

The Coral Reef Conservation Fund is a partnership with the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) and receives additional funding support from the USDA National Resource Conservation Service. The Coral Reef Conservation Fund expects to have up to \$1,500,000 available for funding for this grants cycle.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Projects proposing work in any U.S. coral jurisdictions (American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands) are eligible to apply. Applications for projects in international jurisdictions will be accepted by invitation only.

Within the jurisdictions there are priority locations for both land-based and in-water activities as found in the following table. All other things equal, projects that touch down and/or benefit these geographies and the associated reefs will be given priority for investment this year.

Jurisdiction	Watershed Priority for LBSP	In-Water Priority for Fisheries Management
American Samoa	Aua	Fagamalo Village MPA
CNMI	Achugao	Managaha Marine Conservation Area
Florida	Government Cut	FKNMS Sanctuary Preservation Areas - Iconic Reefs and Control Sites (Carysfort Reef & Elbow Reef, Looe Key & American Shoal, Sombrero Key & Delta Reef, Eastern Dry Rocks & Sand Key)
Guam	Manell-Geus	Piti Bomb Holes Marine Preserve



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Hawaii	West Maui, Kihei	Kahekili Herbivore Fisheries Management Area, Kihei, Olowalu, Southeast Molokai (Kawela)
Puerto Rico	Culebra	Canal Luis Pena Natural Reserve
USVI	St. Croix East End Marine Park	St. Croix East End Marine Park

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The most competitive applications under this funding opportunity will directly implement projects in the following priority categories for reefs associated with the priority geographies above. Coral reef conservation projects that either fall outside of or only indirectly address these priority categories or geographies are still eligible for funding but are considered lower priority than those with a direct nexus. Projects under all categories are of interest but some have specific needs identified for this year.

I. Threat Reduction to Priority Reef Sites

Projects under this category will support implementation of priority activities identified in watershed management plans, marine protected area plans or fisheries management plans with an increased priority for activities that benefit reefs at the above locations.

- 1. Establish Water Quality Targets:** Competitive projects will work at one of the listed watersheds above to establish criteria and science-based targets for nutrient and sediment reduction. Projects should approach water quality targets comprehensively using baseline water quality monitoring or establishing sustainable monitoring programs where they do not exist and demonstrating prioritized land-based actions may contribute to threat reduction targets and how that will be monitored. Further priority will be given to projects that focus on the targets at a specific location but that document the process and criteria in such a way that it can be used as a road-map for establishing targets in other watersheds for the jurisdiction.
- 2. Reduce land-based pollution inputs to coral reef tracts:** Projects should engage local private industry, community groups, and/or individuals in direct sediment and nutrient threat reduction activities such as streambank stabilization, green infrastructure, promoting the use of native planting materials, and Best Management Practice (BMP) installations to reduce sediment flow to reefs, or efforts to reduce polluted runoff through water conservation or grey water re-use. Proposals should incorporate specific performance metrics to monitor the effectiveness of project activities in reducing threats to nearshore coral reef ecosystems, including estimates of percent reductions in a given threat as a result of specific project activities.
- 3. Increase fish stocks of key species along priority reef tracts:** Projects should identify activities that support local managers and communities in reef fish management within



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priority reef tracts including training, cost/benefit analysis of management options and activities to increase compliance. Proposals **MUST engage local fisheries managers** in the project team and should incorporate specific performance metrics to monitor the effectiveness of project activities toward increasing fish biomass within key functional roles over the long term. Activities that directly support fisheries management efforts at the ‘in-water’ priority geographies are of the highest priority for this category. Priority taxa for this work include Parrotfish Families, Surgefish Family and hogfish (*L. maximus*).

II. Coral Reef Restoration

Projects under this category will help jurisdictions prepare to implement coral reef restoration projects. The expected size of awards through the Coral Reef Conservation Fund is unlikely to be sufficient to support large-scale restoration efforts but rather prepare for these larger efforts and increase their likelihood for success.

1. **Increase Capacity for Coral Restoration at Scale:** Projects under this category will increase the available number and diversity of coral and associated reef species available for direct coral reef restoration efforts. Activities may include but are not limited to training in propagation techniques, establishing new nurseries, techniques to scale-up propagation, and exploring the needs of new and complex lifecycle species.
2. **Support Out-planting Success:** Projects under this category will focus on smaller-scale out-planting case studies that seek to learn about predation, competition, water quality, disease resistance, etc. or help streamline logistical hurdles like permitting that can be used to increase the success of larger scale restoration efforts. Projects can also coordinate with existing out-planting on larger scale projects to further refine techniques to increase success and test approaches.

III. Increase Management Capacity in Coral Conservation

The Coral Reef Conservation prioritizes applied research that responds to needs identified by jurisdictional coral reef managers. Projects under this category will seek to fill specific gaps in coral conservation and management and **MUST have a management partner** that they are working with to develop research questions and that will be the primary audience for results. Competitive projects under this category will seek to have results accessible to coral practitioners beyond a journal publication.

2021 priorities include:

- o Established water quality thresholds for optimal coral reef health by jurisdiction/region and/or for different abiotic conditions (flushing rates) for sediments, nutrients, and common toxicants that managers can use to evaluate management actions to protect nearshore reefs. Where thresholds exist, interest is in simple but quantitative monitoring techniques and protocols that can be sustained across jurisdictions to evaluate nearshore and on-reef levels of these thresholds.



- Established thresholds and tipping points of site characteristics (ocean temperature, ocean chemistry (PH), water quality, fish biomass, etc.) to inform where restoration/replanting efforts are more likely to succeed including suitability by species (corals and crustose coralline algae);
- Efforts to better understand the relationship between herbivorous fish biomass and coral reef condition and resiliency including tipping points in biomass for services such as algal control; and
- Collection of essential life history (e.g., age and growth, reproductive characteristics, mortality rates) and ecological information (e.g., trophic interactions, habitat requirements) for parrotfish, surgeonfish, hogfish (*L. maximus*), and large-bodied snappers and groupers; data should be applicable to fisheries models and/or other reef fish management efforts.

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, a list of metrics for the *Coral Reef Conservation Fund* is available in Easygrants. Applicants will choose from this list 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 an applicable metric has not been provided, please contact *Michelle Pico* (pico@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Establishing Water Quality Targets	Research - # of research studies completed	If an assessment of the key threats to a watershed/reef complex is being proposed then it is one study per watershed/reef tract.
Implementation of management plans	Management or Governance Planning - # plan activities implemented	Please reference the specific action and plan in the ‘Notes’ field that will be implemented during the period of performance.
Reduce land-based pollution inputs to coral reef tracts	BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Acres with BMPs Lbs sediment avoided (annual) Lbs nutrients avoided (annual)	Most proposals will have a combination of area (acres) of improved management and threat reduction metrics. Include necessary monitoring equipment and planning in the scope of work and budget to validate results. Please use the “Notes” section to define target pollutants and explain models used and how acres and reduction are defined.
Increase fish stocks	Improved management practices - Acres under improved management (in-water) Fishing effort - g/m ² of fish biomass	Most proposals will have a combination of capacity building and target fish stock response metrics. Include necessary monitoring and planning in the scope of work and budget to validate results. Please use the “Notes” section to define target species/family/guilds.

Coral Restoration and Interventions	Marine habitat restoration – # of outplants propagated # of outplants # of acers restored (reef)	In the “Notes” please breakdown the value by species/genotypes the project will make available and the relevance of these species/genotypes to restoration for the area/jurisdiction. For the acers target please identify to what density you are restoring or providing a management intervention (i.e. invasive removal).
Increase management capacity for coral conservation	Tool development for decision making - # of tools developed	The tools metric should be used for projects that are creating a new tool or significantly recalibrating a BMP or model to meet the needs of an island setting.
	Research - # of research studies completed # of gov’t entities participating	For applied research projects, ONLY select this metric to measure the direct results of your project activities and the # of gov’t entities participating; do not select any other metrics. The “Notes” section for # of research studies should clearly state progress anticipated within the period of performance and what, if any management questions will be answered at the close of the grant. The “Notes” for # of gov’t entities should articulate the name, position and agency as applicable of those that will be engaged.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions, including parties within and outside of the United States.
- Ineligible applicants include U.S. Federal government agencies and for-profit entities.
- NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program staff are available and encouraged to provide general information on programmatic goals and objectives, ongoing coral reef conservation programs/activities, and regional funding priorities; however, NOAA employees are not permitted to assist in the preparation of applications or write letters of support for any application. If NOAA employees will be a collaborator on a project, they may provide a statement verifying that they are collaborating with the project applicant, confirming the degree and nature of the collaboration, and acknowledging the utility of the proposed work. NOAA employee activities, including travel and salaries, are not allowable costs.

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 AND MATCH

The Coral Conservation Fund offers one grant cycle per year and available funding is expected to be approximately \$1,500,000. Average grant awards will range from \$60,000 to \$250,000, however there is no maximum or minimum requirement. Projects should be 12-24 months in duration. Matching funds from non-U.S. Federal cash or in-kind sources are required at a 1:1 ratio for all proposed projects.

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.

Progress to Management Needs – Scope of work is designed to address management questions and needs and to establish actionable conclusions within the period of performance.

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.

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

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

Monitoring – Project includes a plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period (if applicable) 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.

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.)

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. This funding opportunity will award grants of federal financial assistance funds; applicants must be able to comply with the OMB Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200). While for-profit entities are eligible applicants, charges to a potential award may include actual costs only; recipients may not apply loaded rates or realize profit from an award of federal financial assistance funds.

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), 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 appropriate local, state and federal entities (such as Army Corps of Engineers), prior to submitting their proposal.

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 ([Coral Reef Conservation Fund](#)).

Orientation Webinar (Register)	12/17/2020, 1:00 PM, Eastern Time
Pre-Proposal Due Date	2/1/2021, 11:59 PM, Eastern Time
Invitations for Full Proposals Sent	3/5/2021
Full Proposal Due Date	4/12/2021, 11:59 PM, Eastern Time
Review Period	May-July, 2021
Awards Announced	August, 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 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:
Michelle Pico, pico@nfwf.org

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.