

# SUSTAIN OUR GREAT LAKES

## 2021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Pre-Proposal Due Date: **Tuesday, February 16, 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

Full Proposal Due Date: **Tuesday, April 20, 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

### OVERVIEW

The Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) program is soliciting proposals to benefit fish, wildlife, habitat and water quality in the Great Lakes basin. The program will award approximately \$8.5 million in grants in 2021 to improve and enhance: 1) stream, riparian and coastal habitats; 2) water quality in the Great Lakes and its tributaries, including a new focal area within Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Watershed. The program is administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in partnership with ArcelorMittal, General Mills, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S.D.A Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Significant program funding is provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), a federal program designed to protect, restore and enhance the Great Lakes ecosystem. Partners supporting the funding available for projects in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan watershed include the Caerus Foundation, Crown Family Philanthropies, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Walder Foundation.

### FUNDING AVAILABILITY BY GEOGRAPHY

Up to \$7.2 million in funding may be available for projects in the United States portion of the current or historic Great Lakes basin. **Additionally, at least \$1.36 million will be available for projects in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan watershed.**

### PROGRAM PRIORITIES

All proposals must specifically address how projects will directly and measurably contribute to the accomplishment of program goals. Further information on the program goals can be found in NFWF's [Great Lakes Business Plan](#). In 2021, grant funding will be awarded in six categories:

1. Restore and Enhance Stream and Riparian Habitat
2. Restore and Enhance Coastal Habitats
3. Expand Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities
4. Maintain and Enhance Benefits of Habitat Restoration through Invasive Species Control
5. Restore and Preserve Natural Areas and Biodiversity in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Watershed
6. ***New in 2021: Accelerate Implementation of Conservation Practices and Regenerative Agriculture on Working Lands***



CROWN FAMILY PHILANTHROPIES



### **Category 1: Restore and Enhance Stream and Riparian Habitat**

This category will direct approximately \$1.3 million to projects that improve the quality and connectivity of stream and riparian habitat. Preference will be given to projects designed to improve populations of species of conservation concern, with an emphasis on brook trout and lake sturgeon. Preference will also be given to projects that reduce sediment and nutrient loading to streams and other waters. Funding will primarily support the following four strategies.

- ***Restore aquatic connectivity:*** barrier removal, bridge and culvert replacement, and passage structure installation to facilitate movements of fish and other aquatic organisms
- ***Naturalize stream channel configuration:*** channel realignment and excavation to restore stream meander, floodplain connections, and other geomorphological processes
- ***Improve in-stream habitat:*** installation of in-stream structures to improve geomorphological processes and habitat complexity for fish and other aquatic organisms
- ***Improve riparian habitat:*** bank stabilization, and native plant restoration along streambanks and riparian wetlands to improve habitat and water quality
  - ***Invasive species control:*** Invasive species control activities, particularly early detection and rapid response (EDRR), initial treatments and subsequent retreatments, are eligible for funding in this category. Applicants must demonstrate that proposed invasive control activities are necessary to ensure the success of the broader habitat restoration effort requesting funding. If the majority of project activities and budget are directed toward species control, see Funding Category 4.

***Applicants proposing work in coldwater streams are encouraged to demonstrate value of selected stream sites based on existing regional or organizational strategies and indicate anticipated benefit to brook trout.*** In addition, applicants proposing aquatic barrier removals are encouraged to use the FishWerks tool ([click here](#)) to help describe expected connectivity improvements relative to other potential barrier removal scenarios in the project watershed (see the *Consultation with Sea Lamprey Control Program* section below for more information pertinent to barrier removals). ***Applicants proposing projects to benefit lake sturgeon are encouraged to indicate how the proposed scope of work relates to and builds upon existing lake sturgeon restoration efforts in the watershed, such as a supplementation program or population-based plan.***

### **Category 2: Restore and Enhance Coastal Habitats**

This category will direct approximately \$1.2 million to projects that improve the quality and connectivity of Great Lakes coastal systems and habitats. Funding in this category will support the conservation and restoration of coastal habitats including but not limited to coastal wetlands and adjacent upland habitats, dune and swale habitats, nearshore and shoreline habitats, and restoration of upstream habitats that will measurably benefit the quality or function of coastal habitats (e.g. improving downstream water quality). Projects that request funds to implement Farm-Bill and/or on-farm conservation practices, install or maintain jetties, breakwalls or other grey infrastructure will not be considered for funding. Priority will be given to projects designed to benefit populations of species of conservation concern, with an emphasis on migratory shorebirds and waterfowl, breeding marsh birds, and marsh-spawning fish. Projects may include species-specific management or monitoring actions, such as nesting platforms or exclusion fencing, but these actions must be incorporated into a broader restoration project as one component of the proposed grant request. Funding in this category will primarily support the following strategies.

- ***Improve or maintain coastal hydrology and sediment dynamics:*** restoration actions that improve or mimic natural coastal sediment transport processes, provide/enhance wetland water level management capabilities; or improve other fundamental hydrologic processes focused on benefiting target species or coastal nearshore water quality
- ***Restore costal aquatic connectivity:*** restoration actions that improve hydrological connectivity between Great Lakes waters and adjacent wetlands/streams including installation of passage structures, or removal of sediment and hard structures to improve access by fish and other aquatic organisms
- ***Improve coastal habitat structure:*** restoration actions aimed at improving habitat function and quality to benefit coastal fish or wildlife or to directly improve nearshore water quality. Additional preference will be given to projects using native plant and tree species designed to improve habitat for native pollinators and migratory birds.
  - ***Invasive species control:*** Invasive species control activities, particularly EDRR, initial treatments and subsequent retreatments, are eligible for funding in this category. Invasive species control must be included as a component of broader habitat restoration activities proposed. Applicants must demonstrate that proposed invasive control activities are necessary to ensure the success of the broader habitat restoration effort requesting funding. If the majority of project activities and budget are directed toward species control, see funding category 4.

***At the full proposal phase, all applications must include a breakdown of the acres of habitat types represented within the project area (e.g. dry mudflat, wet mudflat, shallow open water etc.; please refer to additional grantee guidance document available by [clicking here](#)) and estimates for how restoration and enhancement activities will impact these habitat type acreages.*** If the proposed project includes phragmites control, applicants should demonstrate how the project will utilize the Phragmites Adaptive Management Framework (PAMF) to inform control practices and long term operation and maintenance plans <http://www.greatlakesphragmites.net/pamf/>.

### **Category 3: Expand Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities**

The green stormwater infrastructure category will direct approximately \$1.3 million to green infrastructure projects that slow, store and filter stormwater. In addition, a minimum of \$360,000 will be directed to green infrastructure projects within the MMSD green infrastructure service area (Milwaukee, WI). ***Priority will be given to green infrastructure projects in shoreline cities that add more than 100,000 gallons of stormwater storage capacity per year and directly benefit Great Lakes water quality.*** Competitive projects will occur in close proximity or otherwise demonstrate water-quality benefits to the Great Lakes or connecting channels. Preference will be given to projects of sufficient size and scope to significantly reduce runoff into downstream waterbodies (e.g. wetlands) and sewer systems and reduce contaminant discharge to local waterways. Additional preference will be given to projects using native plant and tree species designed to improve habitat for native pollinators and migratory birds. Small, isolated projects (e.g., a single, small parking lot) without a connection to a larger green infrastructure plan or other strategic plan will not be competitive. Projects that are legally required under existing consent decrees or regulations are not eligible for funding. Funding will primarily support the following three strategies.

- **Create and enhance stormwater wetlands:** construction of wetlands in communities to slow, store and filter stormwater while improving habitat
- **Install green infrastructure:** installation of rain gardens, bioswales, pervious surfaces, and other green infrastructure solutions to increase stormwater storage and capture
- **Restore urban and community forests:** strategic planting of diverse native tree species along riparian zones and other flood-prone areas to slow and retain stormwater runoff, moderate water temperatures, improve habitat, and increase ecosystem resiliency

**All applications must report anticipated outcomes in terms of gallons of storm water storage capacity added (design retention capacity) and provide a projection for the volume of stormwater runoff captured and infiltrated per year (gallons/year) due to project activities.** Applicants are encouraged to use the EPA storm water calculator tool, found by [clicking here](#), to estimate stormwater retained by green infrastructure projects and/or i-Tree, found by [clicking here](#), to calculate gallons of storm water treated or intercepted by tree planting projects (utilize a 10-year tree age for measuring stormwater benefits in i-Tree). **All applicants must include an operation and maintenance plan** that details project site operation and management for at least five (5) years after project completion. The plans should describe anticipated actions needed (maintenance schedules and tasks to be completed at scheduled intervals), access to or ownership of equipment needed to maintain project sites, cost estimates, sources of funding to support long-term maintenance plan, long-term partners, parties responsible for implementation and oversight, training needs, and the applicant's and partners' capacity for long-term stewardship of the project site.

Proposed green stormwater infrastructure projects that are located in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Watershed should apply under Funding Category 3. However, if these proposals are not funded through Funding Category 3, they will automatically be considered under Funding Category 5. Additionally, if projects are located in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Watershed, preference will be given to projects that align with the [MMSD Regional Green Infrastructure Plan](#).

#### **Category 4: Maintain and Enhance Benefits of Habitat Restoration through Invasive Species Control**

The invasive species control category will direct approximately \$2.3 million to support invasive species control efforts needed to sustain or enhance the benefits of previous habitat restorations. Funding under this strategy will be limited to control efforts focused on terrestrial, coastal, and aquatic invasive plants. Proposed projects should be of sufficient size, scope, or unique ecological value to necessitate a strategic re-investment in invasive species control. Projects proposing invasive control on a small acreage or on multiple isolated sites that lack strategic or geographic connection will not be competitive. Preference will be given to projects that demonstrate how proposed invasive control work directly protects, reinforces or enhances the value of habitat restoration projects previously funded by the GLRI or SOGL. Funding will primarily support the following two strategies.

- **Re-treat or manage acres to control invasive species:** retreatment of acres that have received initial treatment to further control primary invasive species target(s) and management of secondary invasives appearing post-initial treatment
- **Expand existing invasive control efforts:** treat or manage invasive species on new/previously untreated acres adjacent or strategically connected to existing control efforts

to reduce the threat of future encroachment by invasive species and increase restored habitat quality and scope

Projects will not be competitive if they propose: 1) new or untested technologies that have not passed the proof of concept phase; 2) exclusive focus on EDRR activities (EDRR activities may be incorporated into projects proposed under Funding Categories 1 and 2); 3) control of invasive fish or other animals; or 4) one-off efforts to treat new acres that are not connected to previously funded habitat restorations. Projects that focus on initial invasive species control treatments only, on sites where habitat restoration has not yet occurred, or on a combination of habitat restoration and invasive control should apply via funding categories 1, 2 or 5.

***All applicants must include an operation and maintenance plan*** that details project site operation and management for at least five (5) years after project completion. The plans should describe anticipated actions needed (maintenance schedules and tasks to be completed at scheduled intervals), access to or ownership of equipment needed to maintain project sites, cost estimates, sources of funding to support long-term maintenance plan, long-term partners, parties responsible for implementation and oversight, training needs, and the applicant's and partners' capacity for long-term stewardship of the project site. If applicable, the plan should also describe long term invasive species management and EDRR protocol if applicable. If the proposed project includes phragmites control, applicants should demonstrate how the project will utilize the Phragmites Adaptive Management Framework (PAMF) to inform control practices and long term operation and maintenance plans <http://www.greatlakesphragmites.net/pamf/>.

***All applicants will be required to provide a description of the original habitat restoration project that will benefit from the proposed invasive species control activities.*** This description must include information on the objectives of the original project and whether the completed project met those objectives in terms of acres restored and species or habitats benefitted. The description must also include total funds invested in the restoration (noting specifically GLRI and SOGL funds), and a description of the current status of invasive species control and project maintenance. Other useful information includes potential impacts associated with habitat threats and invasive species control efforts immediately beyond the project perimeter (e.g., invasive species buffer/seed zones that could repopulate invasives).

### **Category 5: Restore and Preserve Natural Areas and Biodiversity in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Watershed**

This category will direct at least \$1.36 million to projects within Wisconsin's Lake Michigan watershed that restore and preserve of a wide variety of habitats and natural landscapes in the region, including but not limited to prairies, grasslands, oak savannas, upland and lowland forests, wetlands and ephemeral ponds, beaches and dune systems. Projects that protect, restore and support both urban biodiversity and habitat quality at the ecological landscape scale will also be considered under this category.

Competitive proposals will achieve a range of ecological and community benefits such as: increasing the complexity, connectivity and quality of habitats and natural areas; improving habitat and community resilience in the face of intensifying environmental stressors related to climate, development, nonpoint source pollution and other factors; enhancing biodiversity and safeguarding habitat for critical species; and supporting healthy populations of native species. Priority will be given to proposals that achieve multiple benefits, particularly to traditionally underserved and

underrepresented communities, Black, Indigenous and communities of color, by improving habitat, ecological services and public greenspace while delivering and measuring social/equitable and economic benefits. Applicants are encouraged to incorporate resources, such as the [Social Vulnerability Index](#), [Milwaukee Water Equity Roadmap](#), [2019 Resilience Plan](#), [MMSD Urban Biodiversity Plan](#) and others, to identify and measure community resilience, diversity, equity and inclusion outcomes and the impact of the project for communities engaged in and served by the project.

At least \$1.36 million will be available exclusively for projects proposed in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan watershed, but additional funding from the traditional SOGL program may also be directed to projects in this geography that advance the strategies outlined in funding categories 1-4. In general, projects in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan watershed that are focused on green stormwater infrastructure, restoration of coastal systems, invasive species control and/or stream and riparian habitat should be submitted under categories 1-4 outlined above.

Geographically eligible projects not funded through funding categories 1-4 will automatically be considered under funding category 5. Alternatively, habitat restoration projects in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan watershed that would not qualify for funding under funding categories 1-4 should be submitted under funding category 5.

All projects seeking funding under category 5 must direct at least 50% of funds requested to on-the-ground implementation. The remaining funds may be directed to complementary efforts including but not limited to: enhancing public greenspace; installing or improving assets that increase access to and use of natural areas, such as trails and boardwalks, paddle craft launches, wildlife viewing areas, etc.; project design and engineering; pre- and post-implementation monitoring and evaluation; applied research; community education and outreach; maintenance or vegetation establishment.

Projects that test or validate innovative approaches to addressing key habitat restoration and stormwater management issues are eligible for funding, but projects must include on-the-ground implementation at a scale to achieve measurable and regionally significant ecological outcomes.

### **Category 6: Accelerate Implementation of Conservation Practices and Regenerative Agriculture on Working Lands**

This category, new in 2021, will direct approximately \$1 million in funding to projects that improve water quality, soil health, biodiversity and working land resilience by providing technical assistance to landowners with a focus on accelerating the planning and adoption of regenerative agriculture (RA) principles. RA is a systems-approach to farming and ranching that integrates multiple principles of agricultural management for improving ecosystem function and resilience (such as): 1) minimize chronic disturbances to the soil and biological community, 2) maximize diversity of plants and animals, 3) keep the soil covered, and 4) keep a living root in the ground at all times. Grant funding will be used to hire field conservation professionals who will work directly with landowners to develop and implement planning and stewardship actions that generate economic resilience benefits alongside positive environmental outcomes. Projects should be designed to offer technical assistance that is adaptable to each producer's unique goals, experience, tolerance to risk, and other factors that affect their path to a regenerative system. Competitive proposals will

encourage and support landowners in developing and/or advancing a comprehensive holistic approach to managing working lands that build back soil productivity and function and enhance the ecosystem. Competitive projects will facilitate programs that advance multiple points of entry for farmers and producers and that seek to increase enrollment in Farm Bill practices in complement to advancing RA principles and/or developing RA management plans.

Priority actions for technical assistance throughout the Great Lakes region include:

- ***Improve Soil Health, Water Quality and Biodiversity:*** provide technical assistance to landowners to strategically apply soil health and RA conservation practices, such as the use of cover crops in crop rotation, construction of on-farm riparian buffers and wetlands, drainage and tillage practices to reduce sediment and phosphorous losses and improve fish and wildlife habitat
- ***Engage Landowners in Conservation and Regenerative Agriculture Planning and Peer to Peer Learning:*** coordination of outreach and implementation of conservation systems and RA principles on agricultural land and adjacent riparian and buffer lands. Outreach and convening of farmer-led groups to engage in peer to peer learning, discussion and conservation planning (nutrient management plans, forest stewardship plans, etc.) to advance regional knowledge and adoption of RA principles

At least \$400,000 will be directed to projects in the western lower peninsula of Michigan. At least \$160,000 will be directed to projects in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Watershed. Priority will be given to applicants that build upon established relationships with landowners through previous local work or incorporate partnerships with local entities that are previously established and engaged partners with landowners. ***All applications must report anticipated outcomes in terms of acres with best management practices (BMPs) applied to reduce nutrient or sediment loads (this encompasses RA principles or any meaningful on or off farm action to improve soil health, water quality and/or biodiversity) and pounds of sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus inputs avoided annually.*** If awarded, all grantees will be required to submit additional field-level data to NFWF to help measure anticipated benefits of RA practices in terms of greenhouse gasses, carbon and/or water benefits. If applicants wish for positions to be co-located with an NRCS office, concurrence documentation from the appropriate NRCS Area Conservationist should be provided as evidence of available space and resources to support these positions. Please ensure the project is in alignment with the goals/priorities of the respective state in which your project is located. A list of state contacts can be found [here](#).

## **METRICS AND MONITORING**

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Sustain Our Great Lakes program has a list of performance metrics in Easygrants for grantees to choose for reporting (all possible metrics are shown in the table below). All applicants will be required to select and report on metrics to monitor the progress of projects throughout the lifetime of the grant and quantify project impact and outcomes. ***Additional guidance to assist applicants in selecting and reporting metrics and project outcomes is available at [www.nfwf.org/greatlakes](http://www.nfwf.org/greatlakes).*** All grantees should review this document when selecting metrics as a part of their Easygrants application.

If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please **contact Aislinn Gauchay**, NFWF Great Lakes Program Director ([aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org](mailto:aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org); 612-564-7284) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

In addition to the performance metrics below, applicants are encouraged to monitor biological outcomes, particularly improvements to target fish, shorebirds, breeding marsh birds, and waterfowl populations. For information on the type of monitoring data requested by the Sustain Our Great Lakes program and for guidance on how to incorporate biological monitoring into a proposal, please **contact Aislinn Gauchay** using the preceding contact information.

Each proposal should describe a monitoring plan to measure outcomes and assess the success of the proposed project. At a minimum, the description should: 1) indicate the metrics that will be used to track progress and quantify outcomes; 2) outline the approach for establishing baseline conditions against which post-implementation conditions will be compared; and 3) demonstrate plans and resources for post-implementation monitoring.

Applicants may use grant funding to support monitoring associated with the proposed project. ***Applicants are encouraged to direct approximately 10 percent of the project budget toward this need.*** Some projects may warrant using a larger amount of the project budget for monitoring.

| <b>Funding Strategy</b>            | <b>Recommended Metrics</b><br><i>Applicants within Wisconsin’s Lake MI watershed should select relevant metrics from any of the strategies below as they relate to the project design and anticipated outcomes.</i>  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Stream and Riparian Habitat</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Miles of instream habitat restored</li> <li>● Miles of riparian habitat restored</li> <li>● # passage barriers rectified</li> <li>● # habitat structures installed</li> <li>● Miles of stream opened</li> <li>● Lbs. of phosphorus prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● Lbs. of sediment prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● Lbs. of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually</li> </ul>   |
| <i>Coastal Habitat</i>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Acres of wetland habitat restored</li> <li>● Removal of invasives – acres restored (invasive control – initial/first treatment)</li> <li>● Miles of beach or dune habitat restored (includes shoreline)</li> <li>● Acres with restored hydrology</li> <li>● Acres of floodplain habitat restored</li> <li>● # passage barriers rectified</li> <li>● # structures installed (water control)</li> <li>● Lbs. of phosphorus prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● Lbs. of sediment prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● Lbs. of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually</li> </ul> |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Green Stormwater Infrastructure</i><br/>*Required metric</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● *Gallons of stormwater storage added (include projection of gallons of stormwater captured or infiltrated annually)</li> <li>● Square feet of impervious surface removed</li> <li>● Square feet of green infrastructure installed</li> <li>● Number of trees planted</li> <li>● Lbs. of phosphorus prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● Lbs. of sediment prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● Lbs. of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually</li> </ul>  |
| <p><i>Invasive Species Control</i></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Acres restored (total area treated, re-treated or controlled for invasive species)</li> <li>● Acres re-treated (acres receiving additional treatment post initial treatment)</li> </ul>  |
| <p><i>Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Watershed</i></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● *Gallons of stormwater storage added (include projection of gallons per rain event for WI Lake Michigan projects)</li> <li>● Acres of floodplain habitat restored</li> <li>● Miles of beach or dune habitat restored (includes shoreline)</li> <li>● Acres of greenspace (neighborhood green space and habitat) created or improved</li> <li>● # access pts developed/improved (public access or use of natural areas or greenspace)</li> <li>● Number of volunteer hours</li> <li>● # jobs created (number of individuals hired by organization or contractor directly working on the project (non-volunteers)<br/>This reflects the addition of new jobs to the local and regional economy as the result of the work proposed in the grant)</li> <li>● # people reached (number of community members (volunteers, local groups, residents) meaningfully engaged in the project design, implementation, or who utilize the project's on-the-ground assets post-implementation)</li> </ul> |
| <p><i>Accelerate Implementation of Conservation Practices and Regenerative Agriculture on Working Lands</i><br/>*Required metric</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● *Acres with BMPs applied to reduce nutrient or sediment loads</li> <li>● *Acres under improved management</li> <li>● *Lbs. of phosphorus prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● *Lbs. of sediment prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● *Lbs. of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● # conservation plans developed</li> <li>● # management plans with BMPs</li> <li>● # people (landowners) reached by outreach, training, or technical assistance activities</li> <li>● # jobs sustained</li> <li>● # jobs added</li> </ul>   |

## **ELIGIBILITY**

### *Eligible and Ineligible Entities*

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions.
- Ineligible applicants include federal government agencies, unincorporated individuals, and private for-profit businesses.

### ***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.
- **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.
- Federal funds and matching contributions may not be used to procure or obtain equipment, services, or systems (including entering into or renewing a contract) that uses telecommunications equipment or services produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities) as a substantial or essential component, or as critical technology of any system. Refer to Public Law 115-232, section 889 for additional information.

## **FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH**

Approximately \$8.5 million is expected to be available for grant awards in 2021, with at least \$1.36 million of that total funding to be directed to projects in Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan watershed. In the past three years, the program has awarded an average of 25 grants per year, representing an application success rate of 22%.

### **SOGL Funding Categories 1 – 4**

Individual grant awards will range from **\$100,000 to \$1,000,000**.

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two years following finalization of a grant agreement. The standard grant period may include a third year in cases with a demonstrated need for additional time to complete planning, permitting, final design, engineering, implementation or monitoring. The project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for project completion. Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished, all requested funds are spent, and all matching funds are spent or applied. The start date indicated in an application should not precede September 1, 2021.

The ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process, and projects that offer a 1:1 match ratio with contributions from non-federal sources will be more competitive. Applicants are also encouraged to indicate relevant federal contributions as a way to demonstrate the scope of partner investment in the project.

Matching contributions must be spent or applied between the start and end dates indicated in the application.

\*Matching contributions may include 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. The cost of land acquisition or easement may also qualify as leverage for a project involving work at the protected site. In addition, eligible indirect costs (that would not be paid with requested grant funding) may be applied as match. More information about using indirect costs as match can be found by [clicking here](#).

SOGL Funding Category 5 and Projects Proposed in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Watershed  
Individual grant awards will range from **\$50,000 to \$300,000**.

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two years following finalization of a grant agreement with the option to request up to four years if a proposal includes significant pre- and post-implementation activities, such as engineering, design, monitoring and evaluation, maintenance, and applied research. The project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for project completion. Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished, all requested funds are spent, and all matching funds are spent or applied. The start date indicated in an application should not precede September 1, 2021.

[Fund for Lake Michigan](#) will provide up to \$400,000 in matching funds to a subset of grants awarded within Wisconsin's Lake Michigan watershed. If applicants wish to submit their projects for funding consideration to the Fund for Lake Michigan, contact Casey Eggleston [casey@fundforlakemichigan.org](mailto:casey@fundforlakemichigan.org) prior to submitting a SOGL pre-proposal.

Match is not required; however, applicants are encouraged to share sources of committed and pending match to demonstrate project investment and partnership commitments\* (*see eligible sources of match above*). Applicants are also encouraged to indicate relevant federal contributions as a way to demonstrate the scope of partner investment in the project. Matching contributions must be spent or applied between the start and end dates indicated in the application.

SOGL Funding Category 6  
Individual grant awards will range from **\$100,000 to \$300,000**.

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two to three years following finalization of a grant agreement. The project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for project completion. Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished, all requested funds are spent, and all matching funds are spent or applied. The start date indicated in an application should not precede September 1, 2021.

Projects are required to provide at least a 1:1 match ratio with contributions from non-federal sources to be considered for funding. Matching contributions must be spent or applied between the start and end dates indicated in the application.

\*Matching contributions may include 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. The cost of land acquisition or easement may also qualify as leverage for a project involving work at the protected site. In addition, eligible indirect costs (that would not be paid with requested grant funding) may be applied as match. More information about using indirect costs as match can be found by [clicking here](#).

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with organizational and funding source policies. The Sustain Our Great Lakes advisory team and a panel of state and provincial reviewers will use the following criteria as a strong basis for project selections. Project selections may also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic balance, and balance among project types and grant size.

### Conservation Merit

- **Program Goals and Priorities:** Project aligns with program goals and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the funding categories and subsequent strategies. For more information about the strategies and investment objectives, see NFWF's [Great Lakes Business Plan](#).
- **Context:** Project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy. Project references documentation to support stated alignment with state or federal 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.
- **Scale:** At a minimum, project will improve habitat on the order of tens of acres or hundreds of stream feet and/or add storm water storage on the order of hundreds of thousands of gallons.
- **Resilience:** Project will increase habitat resilience within the context of increased stress due to more frequent and intense wet weather events, variable lake levels for the Great Lakes and other associated threats.
- **Project Efficacy:** Proposal should indicate the long-term efficacy of project activities, including projected or anticipated performance over 5 to 10 years, anticipated useful life of project elements (construction, habitat restoration/management practices) and required maintenance over time to sustain function.
- **Species of Conservation Concern:** Habitat project will benefit species of conservation concern, with a focus on brook trout, lake sturgeon, marsh-spawning fish, breeding marsh birds, shorebirds and waterfowl. If applicable based on design and habitat type, habitat restoration projects should utilize native herbaceous, shrub and tree species that provide enhanced habitat for pollinators and/or stopover habitat for migratory birds and describe anticipated benefits to those target species.
- **Efficacy of Invasive Species Control:** Proposal for invasive species control should demonstrate how: 1) the work relates to a comprehensive restoration plan; 2) native vegetation will be re-established, as appropriate; and 3) the project outcomes will be sustained through time.

## Project Costs

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

## Qualifications

- **Past Success:** Applicant and/or key project partners have a proven track record of success in implementing relevant practices with specific, measurable results. Additionally, applicants with existing SOGL grant(s) are encouraged to provide a brief status update for active project(s) including the following elements: 1) overview of project activities conducted to date and progress toward outcomes/metrics; 2) identify how the proposed project does/does not intersect with or build upon previously funded SOGL work; 3) address any issue(s) that may impact project outcomes and how they are being addressed.
- **Partnerships:** Appropriate partnerships exist to implement the project and the project is supported by strong local and community partnerships that leverage 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.)

## Implementation

- **On-the-Ground Implementation:** For applications submitted under funding categories 1-4, project will apply the bulk (>70%) of grant funding to on-the-ground work, with the option of using the remaining funds for planning, permitting, final design, engineering, monitoring, outreach or education. For applications submitted under funding category 5 or proposed within Wisconsin's Lake Michigan watershed under categories 1-4, project must include on-the-ground implementation as a primary component of the scope of work, but may also direct funding to pre and post implementation activities at a rate higher than in the SOGL basin-wide opportunity. Activities may include but are not limited to applied research, design and engineering, monitoring and evaluation to assess ecological and community impacts, enhancements to public space, outreach and education. etc.
- **Timeliness:** Project has commenced planning, design and engineering to the extent that on-the-ground implementation can begin shortly after the grant is awarded.

- **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.

### Evaluation and Maintenance

- **Monitoring:** Project includes a plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period to track project success and address new challenges and opportunities.
- **Long-term Sustainability:** Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time; proposal includes description of required maintenance activities, estimated maintenance costs, a list of long-term partners, and parties responsible for implementation and oversight, and plans to secure resources for long-term maintenance.

### CONSULTATION WITH SEA LAMPREY CONTROL PROGRAM

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) works in partnership with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to implement the Sea Lamprey Control Program (Program) in the Great Lakes. The Program uses multiple control methods to reduce sea lamprey populations in Great Lakes tributaries including barriers, dams and other existing structures that block spawning-phase sea lampreys from spawning and larval habitat. Annually, the Service inspects structures across the Great Lakes to determine their potential for preventing sea lampreys from migrating upstream. That information is maintained in a database and can be viewed using the [Great Lakes Fishery Commission Barrier Mapping Tool](#). The Service uses the database information to determine impacts to the Program when a structure (barrier, culvert, embankment, dike, water control structure, etc.) is proposed for removal or modification. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission requests that any removal or modification project proposed in the Great Lakes basin be reviewed by Program staff during the project planning process. To help avoid adverse impacts related to sea lamprey passage, ***applicants proposing removal or modification of aquatic barriers must include concurrence documentation from the Sea Lamprey Control Program or an indication that consultation with the Program has begun with the pre-proposal. Applicants must include concurrence documentation that proposed barriers have been reviewed and approved by the Program with the full proposal.*** Project proposals and any other comments or questions regarding sea lamprey barriers can be directed to the Sea Lamprey Barrier Program (Kevin Mann: [kevin\\_mann@fws.gov](mailto:kevin_mann@fws.gov); Matt Symbal: [matthew\\_symbal@fws.gov](mailto:matthew_symbal@fws.gov)).

### OTHER

Grants may be supported with funding from multiple sources, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).

**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), 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 [Sustain Our Great Lakes website](#) for the most current dates and information.

- |                                   |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ✓ Webinar for Applicants          | January 13, 11:00 AM ET  |
| ✓ Virtual Workshop for Applicants | February 2, 11:00 AM ET  |
| ✓ Pre-Proposal Due Date           | February 16, 11:59 PM ET |

|                                  |                       |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ✓ Invitations for Full Proposals | Late-March            |
| ✓ Full Proposal Due Date         | April 20, 11:59 PM ET |
| ✓ Proposal Review Period         | May - August          |
| ✓ Awards Announced               | September             |

## WEBINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Sustain Our Great Lakes partners will host the following webinars to share additional information pertinent to the funding opportunities offered by Sustain Our Great Lakes in 2021.

- **SOGL 2021 Funding Opportunity – Guidance for Applicants**

*January 13, 2021 at 11:00 AM Eastern Time*

This webinar will provide additional information on the current funding opportunity, provide additional guidance on the application process, and provide answers to participant questions. Webinar participants can **register** here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7598751659415128076>

- **Virtual Workshop: SOGL 2021 Funding Opportunity**

*February 2, 2021 at 11:00 AM Eastern Time*

This virtual workshop hosted by NFWF will provide additional information on the SOGL 2021 funding opportunity including specific guidance on navigating the application process, answers to participant questions, specific guidance related to the funding categories offered in 2021 and an opportunity for one-on-one discussions with NFWF. Workshop participants can **register** here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4862861065275983884>

## 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](https://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.
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.



Additional guidance to assist *applicants in selecting and reporting metrics and project outcomes* is available at [www.nfwf.org/greatlakes](http://www.nfwf.org/greatlakes). All grantees should review this document when selecting metrics as a part of their Easygrants application.

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

Aislinn Gauchay, NFWF Great Lakes Programs Director ([aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org](mailto:aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org); 612-564-7284)

Traci Giefer, NFWF Senior Manager, Great Lakes Programs ([traci.giefer@nfwf.org](mailto:traci.giefer@nfwf.org); 612-564-7296)

**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.