Killer Whale Research and Conservation Program
2021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Overview Webinar: **March 4, 2021 11:00AM Pacific / 2:00PM Eastern Time**
Pre-Proposal Due Date: **April 8, 2021 by 11:59PM Eastern Time**
Full Proposal Due Date: **June 24, 2021 by 11:59PM Eastern Time**

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc., the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are pleased to announce continued support for the effective implementation of three key strategies to aid in the recovery of the Southern Resident killer whale (SRKW) Distinct Population Segment. The program will award up to $800,000 in funds this year for SRKW conservation and may also support catalytic projects in other killer whale populations.

Conservation strategies for this program include:

- **Increase prey availability**: support projects that increase availability of key salmon runs that are a critical part of the Southern Resident population's diet.

- **Improve habitat quality**: support projects that reduce threats to priority killer whale habitat from pollution and contaminants, vessel traffic and noise.

- **Strengthen management through research**: support research to improve monitoring of demographics and distribution, health assessments and effectiveness of management actions.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

The majority of awarded projects will focus on the habitats used by the SRKW population of the Salish Sea. Proposals that work in other locations are eligible for funding, but priority will be given to projects focused in the northeastern Pacific Ocean. Some geographic priorities are specific to the priority strategies and are referenced below for further guidance.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The most competitive projects under the 2021 cycle of the Killer Whale Research and Conservation Program will directly implement projects under the following priority topic areas. **Applicants should list which priority area(s) they are targeting in their proposal narrative**. Projects outside of these priority areas or that indirectly influence these topics are still eligible for funding provided they support the goals and Priority 1 activities outlined in the [Implementation Schedule from the Recovery Plan for Southern Resident Killer Whales](#) or recommendations from the [Southern Resident Orca Task Force Report](#). Priorities from similar management/conservation plans for other killer whale populations may also be considered.

Increase Prey Availability: Projects under this priority will seek to synthesize existing information, fill data gaps, and evaluate potential effects of salmon harvest, hatchery and habitat-related actions on the prey base of killer whales. The highest priorities for the 2021 cycle are to:

- Increase hatchery production where it is appropriate to do so for Chinook runs that have strong nexus with SRKW population needs ([click here for prioritized list](#)). Projects under this priority must have a letter of support from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and outline how the impacts to wild stocks will be reduced/monitored/mitigated from the increase in production. Hatcheries proposals that work with other NFWF partners and current projects on release protocols to test increases in survivorship through increasing the release window will be of higher priority for funding.

- Support floodplain restoration/connection efforts in the Snohomish and Skagit watersheds. Projects under this priority should reference the relative priority of these actions in an existing conservation planning document (such as an ESA recovery plan). Projects that will be interacting with or manipulating the environment are encouraged to apply for a smaller grant to secure the necessary permits and engineering plans. Projects that have secured all of the necessary permits are eligible for larger grants but should not exceed a request of $250,000.

- Explore opportunities to generate/protect forage fish and smolt migration habitat through coordinated efforts that engage multiple landowners and help to streamline the permitting process. Efforts to reduce predation of forage fish and fry throughout these migration corridors (i.e. removal of pinniped haul-out structures, differing release times of fry), will also be considered and should include monitoring efforts to demonstrate the relative success of these efforts.

Improve Habitat Quality: Projects under this priority will work to identify and reduce tangible land-based and in-water threats to the SRKW population. There is particular interest in projects that partner and coordinate with existing programs that may not have a SRKW focus but bring other resources and expertise on habitat quality issues to the needs of the population. The highest priority for the 2021 cycle is for:

- Projects that seek to increase awareness and compliance of the recreational boating sector with vessel regulations around whales through activities such as signage at marinas and licensing programs and targeting specific audiences like charters and rental boaters that may be unfamiliar with local regulations. Competitive projects will include a monitoring

component to evaluate the success of outreach efforts on the targeted audience in both awareness and compliance.

- Projects that work to implement priority action items in the [Puget Sound Partnership 2016 Action Agenda Implementation Plan](#) that can lead to improved habitat for killer whales. Competitive projects under this category will build partnerships with existing efforts to address threats of run-off, contaminants and other pollutants that have been identified as a health risk to the SRKW population.

Strengthen Management through Research: Projects under this priority seek to fill critical gaps in knowledge that prevent mitigation of key threats to killer whale populations like the previous two listed categories. All of the projects under this category should be of the highest priority to population recovery and have a direct applied relevance to management needs. The most competitive proposals will have a representative of the intended management authority as part of their project team for consultation on what information is needed and in what form to increase management uptake. The highest priorities for the 2021 cycle are for:

- Research to increase knowledge of coastal distribution, habitat use, and prey consumption to inform critical habitat determination, and assess and minimize impacts of ongoing and new coastal activities (i.e., fisheries, alternative energy projects).

- Projects to inform future investment through research and planning activities that will *prioritize the conservation actions*. Competitive proposals under this category will synthesize existing literature and convene experts where appropriate to estimate the potential impact of specific actions to priority salmon populations where possible, and assist in building a highly focused investment strategy for conservation and capacity of priority salmon stocks over a 10-year time horizon.

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grant projects, the Killer Whale Research and Conservation program has a list of metrics in Easygrants for applicants to choose from for future reporting (see below). For projects that are invited to submit a full proposal, we ask that you select the most relevant metrics from this list for your project. Most projects will have at least one metric that will apply but few will have more than two. If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact Michelle Pico (pico@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# individuals reached by outreach, training, or technical assistance activities	Metric notes should clearly state the 'target audience' for which you are trying to train or change behavior through outreach and limit the value to just that audience (not anyone who might see a sign, etc.). Applicants need to build into their project SOW and budget how this metric will be measured (via surveys, etc.) for the target audience.
Volunteer Participation	# of volunteer hours	If your project is directly engaging volunteers please enter the # of volunteer hours and provide further information regarding any specific community sectors you may have targeted in the notes field.
BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction	# counties adopting BMPs	Metric value should ONLY INCLUDE BMPs called for in the *Puget Sound Partnership 2018-2022 Action Agenda* to reduce pollution in KW habitats and should track when a county has sustainably adopted a BMP county wide (not just a one-time pilot).
BMP implementation for storm water runoff	Acres with BMPs to reduce storm water runoff	Enter the number of acres with Best Management Practices (BMPs) to better quantify the actions above. If this is a BMP that is NOT county-wide then capture it here but not above. If it IS county-wide then capture it in both places.
Fish passage improvements	# fish passage barriers rectified	Enter the number of barriers to Chinook salmon passage that have been removed or modified to allow fish passage.
Floodplain restoration	Acres restored	Metric value should ONLY INCLUDE restoration work called for in management plans to increase the recovery potential of specific salmon runs referenced. Work along a river bank should be captured here OR under Riparian restoration – **DO NOT DOUBLE COUNT**.
Riparian restoration	Miles restored	Metric value should ONLY INCLUDE restoration work called for in management plans to increase the recovery potential of specific salmon runs referenced. Work along a river bank should be captured here OR under Floodplain restoration – **DO NOT DOUBLE COUNT**.
Management or Governance Planning	# management plan activities being implemented	Metric value should ONLY INCLUDE 'listed actions' and priorities that the project will **complete** from any of the management or recovery planning documents referenced in the RFP. Please specifically list the plan and the action in the 'Notes'.

Research	# studies completed whose findings are reported to management	Metric value should ONLY INCLUDE research that is 1) called for in one of the plans referenced in the RFP; 2) is completed within the project period to a point where useful information is available for management decision making; and 3) will be disseminated to management in a way that **actively** facilitates uptake into the decision-making process (not just published in a journal). Targeted management office(s) should be identified in the notes field and **a letter from the office** on the proposed relevance of the work is encouraged.
Population	# of returning individuals	Metric should ONLY be used for projects targeting increased survivorship of Chinook salmon with full monitoring programs. Usually this will be hatchery based.
Captive breeding/ rearing/ rehab facilities	# individuals released	Metric should ONLY be used by hatchery programs to help calculate survivorship of Chinook salmon.

ELIGIBILITY

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, U.S. Federal government agencies, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, *Tribal governments and organizations*, educational institutions, and international organizations.
- Ineligible applicants include businesses or unincorporated individuals.

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.
- 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.
- 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

The Killer Whale Research and Conservation Program anticipates awarding up to $800,000 in funding for grants this year. The majority of awards under this program will fall in the range of $50,000 to $150,000; however upper or lower limits to award size are not specified. A minimum of a 1:1 match of cash and/or in-kind services is required (federal funds do apply). Projects may extend from one to three years. Additional year funds are not guaranteed to be available in future years to supplement awards made as a result of this review. Selected projects may be required to submit data funded by this program to a public forum and/or present their results through NFWF-sponsored forums.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

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

Program Goals and Priorities – Project contributes to the Program's overall habitat and species conservation goals as outlined in the referenced planning documents in the overview and priority sections, and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities outlined in the Request for Proposal.

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.

Partnership – An appropriate partnership exists to implement the project and allow for uptake by the appropriate management authority if applicable. The project is supported by a strong local partnership that leverages additional funds and will sustain it after the life of the grant.

Monitoring – Project includes a plan for monitoring progress toward the biological and socioeconomic goals stated in the proposal (i.e. change in habitat/species population number, % behavior change). Monitoring should occur before, during and after the proposed project activities to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise.

Local Impact and Broader Transferability – Project advances an existing conservation plan or

strategy with clear steps for uptake and integration by local management authority (if applicable) and/or has potential and plan to transfer lessons learned to other communities. Preference will be given to applicants that can demonstrate how their data will contribute to the broader conservation community through regional/global/species databases if applicable.

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 and how this project fits into longer-term investment strategies if applicable.

Communication– Project includes a detailed and targeted communication plan (where applicable) to specific audiences and cites the appropriate qualifications/expertise in the project implementation team.

OTHER

Budget – Costs are allowable, reasonable and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's Budget Instructions cost categories. Federally-funded projects must be in compliance with OMB Uniform Guidance as applicable.

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

Procurement – If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by NFWF to the applicant does not constitute NFWF's express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services noncompetitively. When procuring goods and services, NFWF recipients must follow documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable laws and regulations.

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

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

Compliance Requirements – Projects selected may be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act (state and federal), 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 Killer Whales program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information (www.nfwf.org/killerwhales).

✓ Pre-Proposal Applicant Webinar	March 4, 2021, 2:00PM ET
✓ Pre-Proposal Due Date	April 8, 2021, 11:59PM ET
✓ Full Proposal Applicant Webinar	April 27, 2021, 2:00PM ET
✓ Full Proposal Due Date	June 24, 2021, 11:59PM ET
✓ Review Period	August/September 2021
✓ Awards Announced	November 2021

WEBINAR

NFWF staff will host an optional webinar on March 4, 2021 at 11:00AM Pacific Time / 2:00 PM Eastern Time. The webinar will provide: additional information about funding priorities; and in-depth review of the proposal narrative highlighting priority project elements; an overview of the Easygrants portal and application process; tips for submitting competitive proposals; and answers to participant questions. Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to participate in person although staff will work to post a recorded version. Webinar participants can register by clicking here.

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.