



DELAWARE RIVER PROGRAM

2021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Full Proposal Due Date: **Thursday, April 1st 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting proposals to conserve and restore fish and wildlife habitat and water quality in the Delaware River watershed. The Delaware River Program will award matching grants of \$75,000 to \$750,000 each to conserve and restore waters and habitats on public and private land that contribute to the overall health of the Delaware River watershed—as well as benefit the quality of life and economic vitality of the communities in the Delaware River watershed. Approximately \$10 million in grant funding is available. Major funding for the Delaware River Program is provided by the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service and the William Penn Foundation, with additional funding from AstraZeneca.

In 2021, NFWF’s Delaware River Program will award grants through two distinct grant opportunities: Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund (DWCF) *Conservation Action Grants* and Delaware River Restoration Fund (DRRF) *Targeted Implementation and Cornerstone Grants*.

DWCF Conservation Action Grants will be awarded to nonprofit organizations; federal, state, interstate and local governments; Tribal governments and organizations; and educational institutions to implement on-the-ground restoration and conservation projects that achieve the goals of the Delaware River Basin Restoration Partnership and Program [Framework](#) to: sustain and enhance fish and wildlife habitat; improve and maintain water quality for fish, wildlife and people; sustain and enhance water management to benefit fish and wildlife; and improve outdoor recreational opportunities. To address these goals, projects, which may be located anywhere within the Delaware River watershed, must employ one or more of the strategies described in the Program Priorities section below.

DRRF Targeted Implementation and Cornerstone Grants will be awarded to nonprofit organizations, local governments, and educational institutions to implement on-the-ground restoration activities to improve water quality in one or more of seven Delaware River Watershed Initiative ([DRWI](#)) restoration or hybrid “Clusters,” including: the Poconos and Kittatinny, Kirkwood-Cohansey, New Jersey Highlands, Middle Schuylkill, Schuylkill Highlands, Brandywine-Christina, and Upstream Suburban Philadelphia. Projects should be located within or directly benefit Cluster focal areas as identified in Phase 2 and Phase 2+ Cluster Plans. One or more of three priority strategies (described in the Program Priorities section below) must be addressed: conservation on working lands – farms and forests; restoring streams, floodplains and wetlands; and green stormwater infrastructure in urban/suburban landscapes. Cornerstone Grants will be awarded for especially large-scale, strategic, collaborative project(s) in Cluster focus areas that will serve as models for restoration aggregation via the priority strategies.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS



All Delaware River Program projects must be implemented entirely within the Delaware River watershed, which includes portions of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

Organizations located outside the watershed may apply if the project will be conducted entirely within the watershed.

Applicants for DWCF Conservation Action Grant funding are strongly encouraged to use Nature's Network to help guide and refine proposals for project delivery. Please see the detailed map [at this link](#) for information on Nature's Network in the Delaware Watershed.

To be eligible for DRRF Targeted Implementation and Cornerstone Grants, projects must be within or substantially affect Phase 2 or Phase 2+ (as applicable) focus areas of one or more of the Clusters listed above. Please see the detailed map [at this link](#) for more information on Clusters and their focus areas.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

All proposals must clearly address how projects for which funds are requested will directly and measurably contribute to the accomplishment of program priorities enumerated below. For 2021, the Delaware River Program seeks proposals that address the following program priorities:

DWCF Conservation Action Grants. DWCF applicants should propose projects that will address one or more Delaware River Basin Restoration Partnership and Program Framework *Strategic Program Areas* (listed below). Projects should also incorporate one or more *Cross-Program Activities* outlined in the Framework: engage and equip the public to support coordinated restoration and protection; facilitate resiliency of natural systems; increase scientific knowledge, monitoring and research needed for successful project implementation; provide technical assistance for restoration and conservation; conserve areas of regional significance in the Delaware River Watershed. For additional information on DWCF program goals, strategies and activities, please refer to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Delaware River Basin Restoration Program website for the Delaware River Basin Restoration Partnership and Program [Framework](#). Applicants are also encouraged to reference NFWF's Delaware River Watershed [Business Plan](#) for opportunities to enhance project competitiveness by linking Business Plan strategies and Framework Strategic Program Areas whenever possible.

Limited funding is available to facilitate conservation easement and acquisition projects that protect existing, high quality fish and wildlife habitat in the Delaware watershed—particularly for those priority species listed to the right. Requests for land protection funding should only include transaction and project management costs, such as surveys, appraisal, environmental report, etc. Projects should support or facilitate one or more of the Strategic Program Areas below.

Priority for Conservation Action Grants will be given to projects that collaboratively address one or more of the *Strategic Program Areas*.

1. **Strategic Program Area 1: Sustain and Enhance Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration and Conservation Activities.** The basin has diverse habitats that support an array of fish and wildlife, ranging from densely forested headwater streams in the upper basin to the bayshores of the estuary. The program will support projects that conserve and restore ecological function to the important habitats for which the fish and wildlife resources in the basin depend. Conservation and restoration of these habitats will result in ecological, recreational, and commercial benefits.
2. **Strategic Program Area 2: Improve and Maintain Water Quality to Support Fish and Wildlife, as well as Habitats for Fish and Wildlife and Drinking Water for People.** Over 15 million people rely on the water from the Delaware River and tributaries for their drinking water needs. The river also supports a diverse suite of fish and wildlife that depends on high quality water in the river. Projects should coordinate with existing regulatory activities but will focus on non-regulatory efforts to provide additional focus on habitat protection and conservation activities with the objective to protect water quality for both drinking water and the health of the fish and wildlife resources that depend on clean water. Projects in geographies that are legally required under existing state or federal consent decrees or regulations—especially urban and suburban green stormwater infrastructure projects—should demonstrate an effort to go above and beyond minimum legal compliance, promoting or accelerating innovative and transformative practices for stormwater management. *GSI projects should be high-impact and primarily benefit fish and wildlife habitat.* Applicants considering applying for a DWCF grant for GSI projects should contact NFWF staff prior to developing a proposal.
3. **Strategic Program Area 3: Sustain and Enhance Water Resource Management for Volume and Flood Damage Mitigation Improvements to Benefit Fish and Wildlife Habitat.** Municipal and industrial water supply, energy production and agricultural uses place high demands on water resources in the Delaware River Basin. Fish and wildlife also depend on water availability in their habitats. Managing water use for drinking water needs and human uses while still providing water to support fish and wildlife is challenging. Projects should coordinate with existing regulatory activities but focus on non-regulatory efforts to support

DWCF projects that address listed and at-risk species needs, or [NFWF business plan](#) priority species will be considered more competitive:

NFWF Priority species

- Eastern brook trout
- Alosine species like American shad and river herring
- Golden-winged warbler
- Wood thrush
- Cerulean warbler

ESA species

- Red knot
- Bog turtle
- Black rail
- Dwarf wedgemussel

At-risk species

- Birds
 - Saltmarsh sparrow
 - American oystercatcher
 - Ruddy turnstone
 - Whimbrel
 - Eastern whip-poor-will
- Freshwater mussels
 - Brook floater
 - Green floater
 - Tidewater mucket
 - Yellow lampmussel
- Pollinators
 - Native bumblebees
 - Monarch butterfly
 - Frosted elfin
- Turtles
 - Spotted turtle
 - Wood turtle

demands on water resources of the basin and enhance tolerance of potential drought and flood conditions.

- 4. Strategic Program Area 4: Improve Opportunities for Public Access and Recreation in the Basin Consistent with the Ecological Needs of Fish and Wildlife Habitat.** Because of its location within a densely populated part of the country, the basin offers ample outdoor recreation opportunities to millions of people. Projects should support high-quality recreational experiences in the basin, including boating, hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, wildlife viewing and birding, thus providing an economic benefit to the watershed.

NEW: DWCF Incubation and Investment Grants

NFWF is making available \$500,000 funding for projects that enable the DWCF to support high-performing science and innovation concepts. Projects should have significant potential to transform the Delaware River watershed's future in areas including conservation and restoration action, diversity and inclusion, and public access.

Incubation and Investment Grants will be awarded to projects that address cross cutting issues that are barriers to, or represent unique opportunities for, accelerating habitat improvement for fish, wildlife and people in the Delaware River watershed. For example, grants may support innovative methods and new technologies to drive down implementation costs, ensure the effectiveness and continual improvement of conservation and restoration practices, and enhance community engagement and experience in nature.

Projects should seek to build proof of concept and are strongly encouraged to include assessment and evaluation to draw meaningful conclusions about efficacy and to include robust documentation of results to enhance transferability and utility.

DRRF Targeted Implementation and Cornerstone Grants.

Priority for Targeted Implementation and Cornerstone Grants will be given to projects that address at least one of the following strategies in one or more of the focus areas identified in the DRWI Phase 2 or Phase 2+ Cluster plans. Note that this 2021 RFP is the final funding opportunity for completing Phase 2 plans (P2Y4). For questions about Cluster plans, please contact Rachel Dawson (rachel.dawson@nfwf.org).

- 1. Conservation on Working Lands – Farms and Forests.**

Deliver outreach and technical assistance to successfully engage private landowners and agricultural producers in restoration and conservation on their lands. Programs may provide technical assistance to producers, forest managers, and other private landowners to improve stream health and water quality. Competitive projects will prioritize a comprehensive and geographically aggregated approach to agriculture conservation and demonstrate strong collaboration with relevant federal, state, regional agencies, and conservation organizations. Projects should leverage federal Farm Bill resources and other government programs for implementation and ensure landowners are invested in the success of the project. Specific approaches include the following:

NEW: Call for Tree Planting Projects

Through a new partnership with AstraZeneca, NFWF is seeking DWCF and DRRF projects that include a significant element of tree planting. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals with projects utilizing robust riparian buffer plantings, urban and suburban canopy expansion, reforestation and afforestation, and other tree planting practices for improved habitat and water quality. Applicants seeking to take advantage of these new funds should use the metric for number of trees planted in addition to other appropriate metrics. Please contact program staff with any questions.



- a. Reducing pollutants (bacteria, nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, thermal, etc.) entering headwater streams by increasing landowner adoption of conservation and nutrient management plans and implementation of conservation practices.
 - b. Establishing comprehensive, or “whole farm” best management practice (BMP) programs working with landowners to address all aspects of polluted runoff from barnyard, field, pasture, and areas of conveyance including hydric soils, groundwater, wetlands, floodplains, and streams; establishing a comprehensive conservation approach on the farm that includes implementation of a conservation plan that addresses all water quality resource concerns.
 - c. Increasing farmer participation in programs to conserve water and improve efficiency, increase on-farm infiltration of water to the aquifer and increase riparian buffers.
2. **Restoration of Streams, Floodplains and Wetlands.** Improve or restore natural stream hydrology to reduce stream bank erosion and scouring, improve floodplain storage/infiltration and filtering capacity, and restore stream function to provide clean water. Priority will be given to restoration on public lands or lands that are otherwise permanently or semi-permanently protected. Priority will be given to projects that contribute to the aggregation of restoration. Specific approaches include the following:
- a. Restoring and enhancing existing stream buffers that will significantly improve function to protect in-stream water quality, reduce non-point source pollution conveyance.
 - b. Restoring the capacity of rural/urban/suburban streams to mitigate impact of land disturbance and improve floodwater retention by maximizing infiltration, addressing underlying hydrological challenges, increasing connectivity of streams with floodplains, enhancing and restoring associated wetlands, managing forests for water quality, improving riparian buffers, and restoring eroding stream banks.
3. **Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Urban/Suburban Landscapes.** Accelerate adoption of high-impact green infrastructure practices on urban and suburban private lands. Strong preference will be given to projects of sufficient size and scope to significantly reduce polluted stormwater runoff into sewer systems and contaminant discharge to local waterways. Smaller, isolated projects (e.g., a single, small parking lot) without a connection to a larger green infrastructure strategic plan or other aggregation effort will not be competitive. Similarly, projects intended to educate or provide an outreach function should be considered “complementary strategies” under the DRWI. Projects in geographies that are legally required under existing state or federal consent decrees or regulations should demonstrate an effort to go above and beyond minimum compliance, promoting or accelerating innovative and transformative practices for stormwater management.
- a. Increasing large-scale water conservation and on-site infiltration to reduce runoff, decrease aquifer withdrawals, and improve recharge. Projects may target improved municipal and commercial water management, implementation of upland measures for decreased nonpoint source runoff, technically-appropriate retrofits to stormwater basins (including engineered/scaled graduated outlet structures and increased native re-vegetation in infiltration areas) and other stormwater control measures.
 - b. Restoring and enhancing existing stream buffers and other natural stream function to protect in-stream quality, reduce non-point source pollution, and improve infiltration.

4. **Cornerstone Grants.** Cornerstone Grants will be awarded to projects that exhibit *exceptional strategic planning and partner engagement* to deliver one large project or a suite of projects within the Phase 2 or Phase 2+ focus areas of the seven DRWI restoration or hybrid Clusters. Projects should be designed for measurable impact—and will serve as models that collaboratively advance Cluster efforts to achieve goals set forth in Cluster plans. Proposals should have a specific commitment to increasing the reach and impact of DRWI activities and should leverage complementary strategies to further restoration efforts. Specifically, these projects will:

- a. Establish a project leadership team and coordinate well-defined roles and activities of Cluster partners and other participants for effective project delivery; consider engaging new and non-traditional partners to broaden impact; ensure landowner/operator participation and buy-in.
- b. Address multiple DRRF Priorities as described for Targeted Implementation Grants.
- c. Thoughtfully consider watershed context by complementing existing or planned Cluster projects, aggregating efforts, and/or implementing pollution source reduction strategies (upstream and upland) prior to downstream treatments.
- d. Present a clear work plan with an achievable timeline that includes outputs by which progress will be measured.
- e. Prioritize and fully incorporate monitoring (existing or planned) through coordination with DRWI monitoring, modeling, and citizen science efforts.
- f. Integrate data collection, employ adaptive management and incorporate information-sharing mechanisms within the Cluster and with external partners.
- g. Consult with NFWF and the Circuit Riders in the development of Cornerstone proposals (contact the program director for additional details); ensure appropriate technical assistance is available to partners.
- h. Frame methods and outcomes to serve as examples of strategic restoration to be exported as models to other focal areas and DRWI Clusters.

PROJECT METRICS

To assess project progress and ensure greater consistency of data provided by multiple grants, the Delaware River Program provides a list of metrics in Easygrants. We ask applicants to select only the most relevant metrics for the project (all possible program metrics are shown in the table below). To increase consistency in the usage and calculations of metrics, the NFWF Delaware team created a [2021 Metrics Guidance](#) document to provide additional details and instructions about each metric. Please ensure that, upon choosing a metric to include in your proposal, the calculation of the target value accounts for the instructions listed in the Metrics Guidance. If you believe an applicable metric has not been provided, please contact Claire Flynn (claire.flynn@nfwf.org) to discuss alternatives.

HABITAT RESTORATION		
Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Beach habitat quality improvements	Miles restored	Enter number of miles of restored or protected beach/shoreline habitat; do not double count with erosion/acres restored
Erosion control	Acres restored	Enter the number of acres restored; enter specific type of coastal/shoreline habitat and restoration in NOTES section



Fish passage improvements	# barriers rectified	Enter the number of fish passage barriers rectified; enter species benefitting in NOTES section; if improving or increasing eastern brook trout patch sizes, specify in NOTES section
Fish passage improvements	Miles of stream opened	Enter the number of miles of stream opened to improve aquatic habitat connectivity; if Lake or Pond specify in NOTES section; if improving or increasing eastern brook trout patch sizes, specify in NOTES
Floodplain restoration	Acres restored	Enter the number of acres restored
Instream restoration	Miles restored	Enter the number of miles restored; briefly indicate the type of restoration in the NOTES section
Land, wetland restoration	# trees planted	Enter the number of trees planted and sustained (tree plantings that are urban/green infrastructure can also be included), use the NOTES section to indicate the type of planting, density per acre, and mortality rate. Do not include any additional trees planted to replace mortality in the numerical metric value.
Riparian restoration	Miles restored	Enter miles of riparian areas restored; indicate the type of buffer (e.g. forested, vegetated), buffer width, and acres in the NOTES section. DO NOT include instream restoration.
Wetland restoration	Acres restored	Enter the number of acres restored or enhanced. DO NOT include riparian or instream restoration miles in this measurement.
HABITAT MANAGEMENT		
Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
BMP implementation	Miles of stream with reduced and/or protected water temperature	Enter the number of stream miles with BMPS to reduce and/or protect water temperature. Use the NOTES section to describe the actual degree decrease (or maintenance) of temperature.
BMP implementation for fencing improvements	Miles of livestock fencing improved or installed	Enter miles of fencing and indicate type of improvements or if the fencing is new construction in the NOTES section.
BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction	Acres with BMPs	Enter number of acres; indicate the type of BMP(s) (e.g. manure storage, cover crops) and indicate method of calculating reduction in NOTES section. Please see the DWCF toolbox on the website for calculation resources.
BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction	Lbs N avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually and indicate method of calculating reduction in NOTES section
BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction	Lbs P avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of phosphorous prevented from entering system annually and indicate method of calculating reduction in NOTES section
BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction	Lbs sediment avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of sediment prevented from entering system annually and indicate method of calculating reduction in NOTES section
BMP implementation for prescribed burns	Acres burned	Enter the number of acres that have been treated by prescribed burning; indicate whether private or public land in NOTES section
BMP implementation for stormwater runoff	Acres with BMPs	Enter number of acres treated with stormwater BMP(s); indicate the type of BMP(s) (e.g., rain gardens, constructed wetlands, green roofs, rain barrels, etc.) and inches of rainfall that will be stored, infiltrated and/or filtered within a 48-hour rain event in NOTES section. Include method of calculation; please see the DWCF toolbox on the website for calculation resources
BMP implementation for stormwater runoff	Volume stormwater prevented	Enter the volume (in gallons) of stormwater prevented from entering the system per year; indicate type of BMP(s) in the NOTES section; include method of calculation. Please see the DWCF toolbox on the website for calculation resources.



BMP implementation to mitigate recreational disturbance	Miles with BMPs	Enter the number of miles with BMPs to mitigate recreational disturbance
Early successional forest - Improved mgmt. practices	Acres under improved management	Enter the number of acres under improved management; use the NOTES section to indicate full parcel size benefitting from acres under management
Late successional forest - Improved mgmt. practices	Acres under improved management	Enter the number of acres under improved management; use the NOTES section to indicate full parcel size benefitting from acres under management
Mature successional forest - Improved mgmt. practices	Acres under improved management	Enter the number of acres under improved management; use the NOTES section to indicate full parcel size benefitting from acres under management
Improved management practices	Acres under improved management	Enter the number of acres under improved management, enter type of land (i.e. public or private), and enter specific practice(s) in NOTES section; DO NOT double count with acres of BMPs
CAPACITY, OUTREACH, INCENTIVES		
Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Economic benefits	# jobs created	Enter the number of jobs created; indicate workforce targeted in NOTES section (e.g. youth, veterans, underserved communities)
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# people reached	Enter the number of people who responded to an offer and inquiry delivered by outreach, training, or technical assistance activities; specify the percentage of individuals reached; indicate type of audience (farmers, landowners, municipalities) in the NOTES section
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# people with changed behavior	Enter the number of individuals demonstrating a minimum level of behavior change; briefly describe method of measurement in NOTES section. Characterize the audience (farmers, landowners, municipalities) in the NOTES section
Public Access	# acres with public access	Enter the number of acres now open to public access as a result of the project; include any associated river or stream miles also opened to public access as a result of project
Volunteer participation	# volunteers participating	Enter the number of volunteers participating
PLANNING, RESEARCH, MONITORING		
Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Monitoring	# monitoring programs	Enter the number of monitoring programs established, underway or improved; describe what is being monitored in the NOTES section
Monitoring	# sites being monitored	Enter the number of streams/sites being monitored; briefly describe what is being monitored in NOTES section; include miles/acres/area covered by monitoring
Project Management	Acres with transaction costs and project mgmt activities addressed	Enter the number of acres for which conservation easements and acquisitions will be facilitated; for land protection project management activities, e.g. surveys, appraisal, environmental report
Research	Miles assessed	Enter the number of stream, river, beach or shoreline miles assessed; briefly describe the assessment aim in the NOTES section
Tool development for decision-making	# tools used by decision-makers	Enter the number of tools developed that are used by decision-makers; briefly describe the tool in the NOTES section

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- **DWCF Conservation Action Grants**
 - ✓ Eligible applicants include: non-profit 501(c) organizations; federal, state, interstate, local and municipal governments, Tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions
 - Ineligible applicants include: unincorporated individuals, businesses, and international organizations
- **DRRF Targeted Implementation and Cornerstone Grants**
 - ✓ Eligible applicants include: non-profit 501(c) organizations, local governments, municipal governments, Tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions
 - Priority for *Targeted Watershed Implementation Grants* will be given to DRWI Cluster [participants](#) and their partners.
 - Ineligible applicants include: unincorporated individuals, businesses, U.S. Federal government agencies, state government agencies, and international organizations

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, compensatory mitigation and settlement agreements. However, grant funds may be used to support projects that enhance or improve upon baseline legal and permit 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

NFWF will award approximately \$10 million in grants via the Delaware River Program in 2021. Generally grants of less than \$200,000 will be awarded for restoration at a single site and/or involving fewer partners. Proposals requesting \$200,000 to \$750,000 should represent *broad-based partnerships engaged in implementing comprehensive restoration and conservation approaches* that may include multiple sites and multiple strategies. Grants will be awarded in two categories:

- 1. DWCF Conservation Action Grants** will range from \$75,000 to \$750,000 each. Approximately \$8 million is available (with up to \$500,000 available for Incubation and Investment Grants). These grants require a minimum matching contribution valued at 50% of *total* project costs (i.e., 1:1 match); grants in the higher end of the range are strongly encouraged to exceed 50% match to ensure competitiveness. Required minimum 1:1 match must be from non-federal sources. Voluntary additional match beyond the 1:1 requirement may be from either federal or non-federal sources. Should an applicant encounter significant challenges meeting the 1:1 nonfederal requirement, they are encouraged to contact NFWF or FWS program staff to discuss options. Projects must be ready to begin implementation within six months of the grant award and completed within two years of award.
- 2. DRRF Targeted Implementation and Cornerstone Grants** will range from \$75,000 to \$500,000 each. Approximately \$2 million is available. Only Cornerstone projects are eligible for up to \$500,000; all other DRRF projects may request up to \$300,000. These grants require a minimum matching contribution valued at 25% of total project costs (i.e., 1/3 of the grant request); grants in the higher end of the range, especially Cornerstone Grants are strongly encouraged to approach or exceed 50% match (1:1) to ensure competitiveness. Projects must be ready to begin implementation within six months of the grant award and completed within two years of grant award.

Applicants may only submit a project to one of the above funding categories (e.g. an applicant cannot use the same project or components of the project to apply concurrently for a Conservation Action Grant and Targeted Implementation and Cornerstone Grant).

EVALUATION CRITERIA

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

Technical Merit – Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal relies on sound methods relative to a realistic budget to achieve success. Project engages appropriate technical experts (or includes expert staff) throughout project planning, design, and implementation. Project outcomes are reasonable and measurable.

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.

Metrics – Proposal includes specific, quantifiable performance metrics. Proposal includes requested details and justifications in the metrics NOTES section. Project performance metrics are distinguished from, and contribute to, ecological and social outcome metrics (e.g. water quality improvements, sustainable species population measures, ecological integrity/resilience indices, landscape permeability, community resilience index, outdoor activity participation/volunteer measures, etc.). DRRF proposals must select metrics relevant to their Cluster Plans.

Work Plan – The applicant provides a detailed work plan with clear activities, roles (including partner roles), timeline and outcomes for the project. The work plan can be used to assess project progress. Work plan also notes if and how project will be maintained in the long-term, and by whom.

Monitoring and Project Evaluation – Project includes a plan for monitoring project effectiveness at meeting goals and objectives (outcomes) during and after the proposed project period. Applicant includes an approach to adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise during the grant period. Applicant describes how resources will be used to implement the plan, and to continue evaluating project success. DRRF proposals must describe how the project will integrate with ongoing or planned Cluster monitoring efforts, either by the grantee or by partners.

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 – Project is supported by, and will be delivered by, a strong partnership that leverages additional skills and resources, and will sustain it after the life of the grant. Proposed partners and roles—including short- and long-term—are clearly identified (including potential or contemplated subawards to third party subrecipients of the applicant). A project partner is any community, non-profit organization, tribe, and/or local, state, interstate and federal government agency that contributes time and/or funding to support project planning, design and/or implementation. Proposals requesting more than \$100,000 should include a broader, more robust project partnership.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice – Proposal clearly articulates benefits to underserved and underrepresented communities and any other meaningful DEIJ considerations associated with project delivery—and how those will be monitored and measured.

Letters of Support – Proposal includes letters of support from project partners, stakeholders, contributors and/or technical assistance providers; letters should describe any match or contribution offered to the project and confirm partner roles. Proposal includes landowner or site manager support, acknowledgements or permissions (e.g. certifying site access). Letters of support are strongly encouraged; see the [tip sheet](#) and [Letters of Support Best Practices](#) for additional guidance.

Transferability – Project has potential and a plan to transfer lessons learned to other communities, practitioners or to be integrated into government programs and policies. Proposal notes the demonstration value of the project if relevant.

Evaluation Criteria Specific to DWCF Conservation Action Grants

Program Goals and Strategies – Reviewers will refer to the Delaware River Basin Restoration Partnership and Program [Framework](#) to assess project relevance to Program goals and strategies. Project substantially and expeditiously contributes to on-the-ground habitat restoration and conservation goals outlined above; project addresses one or more of the Strategic Program Areas. Proposal clearly states which strategies the project will address.

Cross-Program Activities – Proposals clearly state how one or more Cross-Program Activities are incorporated into project. Highly competitive proposals will address multiple Cross-Program Activities. Context is provided for need, objectives, expected outcomes and measuring success of Cross-Program Activities.

Project Context – The project is thoughtfully presented within its broader watershed and/or landscape context. Applicant clearly describes why this project should be implemented in this specific location at this time with these partners. Proposal clearly addresses the project’s “institutional significance,” i.e. how the project contributes to other plans and programs, including organizational, local, state, regional, recreational, resilience, etc. plans and programs (please refer to the [Framework Appendix II](#) for additional information on relevant plans). Proposal notes any risk factors which may influence expected project outcomes. Proposals for distinct phases of a larger project should include outcomes and lessons learned from prior project phases. Applicants with existing active DWCF grants should be advised that cumulative awards and prior performance will be evaluated during the review.

There are a variety of tools and plans available that can be used for reference purposes for Delaware River Program proposals (see also this [Toolbox](#) for the DWCF). These should be used to inform and contextualize projects, but not be perceived as limiting prospective projects to only those species, habitats and ecological services identified therein. Proposals to address broader habitat needs and other important species, or other priorities identified in the Framework, are eligible and encouraged.

- NFWF’s Delaware River Watershed [Business Plan](#), which was developed with input from a wide range of watershed partners and stakeholders. The goals and strategies included in the Business Plan are the result of a watershed-wide fish and wildlife habitat prioritization process and geospatial analysis—and they provide a distinct avenue for achieving measurable impact on the ground for habitat and water quality.
- [Nature’s Network](#) is a conservation design for the Northeast region, developed by a team of federal, state, academic, and NGO partners based on the best available science at this scale. It identifies a network of connected, intact, and resilient areas—both lands and waters—that encompass important habitats for key species. These areas are considered the best places to start for strategic conservation planning to support a sustainable future for both human and natural communities. Applicants can apply this tool in the Delaware River Watershed to see how local conservation efforts fit into the bigger picture. That broader perspective can amplify local, state and regional conservation priorities by illustrating their significance on a landscape scale. In turn, by complementing regional priorities, projects can make an impact beyond the watershed boundary by supporting the long-term viability of fish and wildlife species across their ranges.
- At-risk species (ARS) are plants or animals being considered for listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act due to loss of habitat or population declines. Applicants proposing activities which benefit ARS should reference [State Wildlife Action Plans](#) or Species Management or Recovery plans to support the proposed activities and describe how actions will benefit the species. Provide narrative as to how the completed activities will contribute toward the improved conservation of the ARS.

Evaluation Criteria Specific to DRRF Targeted Implementation and Cornerstone Grants

Program Goals and Priorities – Project contributes to the DRWI’s overall water quality improvement goals and has specific, quantifiable activities that contribute to Cluster Plan targets. Project addresses one or more of the priority strategies outlined in the Request for Proposals.



Cluster Plan and Context – The project advances the relevant Cluster Plan and Phase 2 goals, is presented as part of the broader focus area, Cluster and/or watershed context, and is an important element of a thoughtful shared Cluster strategy. See also information above on the use of NFWF’s Delaware River Watershed Business Plan for additional project context, including water quality goals for the watershed developed via the DRWI.

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. The value of land protection activities, including easements or acquired parcels is eligible. Larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review. Federal funding requires a 1:1 non-federal match. Voluntary additional match beyond the 1:1 requirement may be from either federal or non-federal sources.

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 (NEPA), Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to DWCF projects initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). Reimbursement for project activities, including non-construction activities, may be delayed until compliance requirements are complete. 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. NFWF has made [resources](#) available to assist grantees in completing NEPA and other federal compliance. These resources include templates, contacts, and a NFWF-funded consultant available to review documentation and provide process guidance. Please see the tip sheet (link below) for more information.



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.

Applicant Demographic Information – In an effort to better understand diversity in our grantmaking, NFWF is collecting basic information on applicants and their communities via a voluntary survey form (available in Easygrants). This information will not be shared externally or with reviewers. For more details, please see the [tip sheet](#) and the Uploads section of Easygrants.

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the [Delaware River Program page](#) of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information.

Applicant Webinar (Register)	Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2021, 11:00AM, EST
Proposal Tools Webinar (Register)	Friday, Feb. 19, 2021, 10:00AM, EST
Full Proposal Due Date	April 1, 2021, 11:59pm, EST
Review Period	April – May 2021
Awards Announced	Mid-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 RFP document can be downloaded [here](#).

Guidance and best practice documents have been pulled together to assist grantees in building a strong proposal:

- [Metrics Guidance](#)
- [Letters of Support Best Practices](#)
- [DWCF Toolbox](#)
- [NEPA Compliance Resources](#)

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:

Rachel Dawson – Program Director, Delaware River
(202) 595-2643
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Claire Flynn – Manager, Northeastern Region
(202) 595-2449
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Erin Lewis – Coordinator, Northeast Regional Programs
(202) 595-2413
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Field liaisons (aka Circuit Riders) are available to provide application assistance, guidance and troubleshooting for DRRF and DWCF projects. Please reach out to NFWF staff for more information on or access to this free technical assistance. DRWI Cluster partners are strongly encouraged to connect with them prior to submitting an application.

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

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: Easygrants@nfwf.org

Voice: 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.