



NFWF

ConocoPhillips



SPIRIT of Conservation

2021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Pre-Proposal Due Date: May 27, 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time

Full Proposal Due Date: July 19, 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time

OVERVIEW

The *ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation* program is inviting applications for competitive grant funding to be awarded through the 2021 funding cycle. The purpose of this funding is to protect, restore, or enhance grassland, wetland, sage-steppe, and coastal habitats for birds; and to conduct identified priority avian research or monitoring, with an emphasis in focal geographies. The program is a partnership among ConocoPhillips, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Approximately \$1,300,000 is expected to be available for grant awards in 2021.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Projects must occur within landscapes found from the northern slope of Alaska through to the north-south axis of the central United States, including the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast. Priority states include Alaska, Colorado, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

To complete their annual life cycle, bird populations typically require a series of different seasonal or local habitats, for breeding, stopover, and wintering, as well as landscape linkages that allow travel between them. Fragmentation and degradation of these habitats can impede and negatively impact bird populations, highlighting the need to implement strategic conservation.

With geographic focal areas that span seasonal habitats and migratory routes from Alaska along the north-south axis of the central United States to the Gulf Coast, the *ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation* program focuses on improving habitat quality and quantity for both migratory and non-migratory bird populations. Within landscapes heavily dominated by working grasslands, wetlands, and sagebrush habitats, the program places a high priority on partnering with ranchers, farmers, and other private and public land managers to help improve landscape connectivity and habitat quality for birds dependent on these habitats. Examples of species to benefit from projects include, but are not limited to, shorebirds, waterbirds, and waterfowl along the coasts (Alaska, Louisiana, and Texas), sagebrush dependent birds in the interior west, to grassland dependent birds such as Baird's sparrow, Sprague's pipit, Chestnut-collared longspur, and McCown's longspur found across the Great Plains. The *SPIRIT of Conservation* program will primarily support projects that address one or more of the following strategies.

Restore or enhance grassland, sagebrush, wetland, and coastal habitats for birds: conduct restoration activities to expand or improve habitat patch size, connectivity, and quality; remove encroaching woody vegetation that negatively impacts grassland-nesting or sage-steppe habitat nesting birds; reduce invasive species' impact on bird habitats; restore wetland function more beneficial to birds; and restore important breeding, wintering or stopover sites.

Protect key habitats for birds: Support fee title or conservation easement acquisitions for parcels with important habitat linkage/connectivity functions, or important breeding, wintering or stopover sites.

Conduct identified priority research or monitoring: Increase the quality or quantity of bird population data that can be used to inform current and future habitat management decisions. Data should be useful at specific sites or in assessing bird use of habitats across breeding, wintering, or stopover ranges. Key information and knowledge gaps of interest can be found in the following report: Full Annual Cycle Conservation Strategy.

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the *SPIRIT of Conservation* program has a list of metrics in Easygrants for applicants to choose from for future reporting. Applicants will select performance metrics at the Full Proposal stage only. We ask that applicants select only the most relevant metrics from this list for their project (all possible program metrics are shown in the table below). If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact Eric Forward to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Project Footprint	Acreage of project footprint	Enter the total number of acres impacted by one or more project conservation activities. Only count an acre once, even if multiple activities or treatments will occur on that acre during the project.
Improved management practices	Acres under improved management	Applies to any practice that improves the function of existing habitat
Conservation easements	# acres protected under easement	Enter the number of acres protected under long term easement (permanent or >30 yrs.)
Land Acquisition	# Acres acquired in fee	Enter the total number of acres acquired in fee title
Wetland Restoration	# Acres Restored	In the notes section of this metric please indicate what species is benefitting and the dominant habitat type being restored
Land Restoration	Acres Restored	In the notes section of this metric please indicate what species is benefitting and

		the dominant habitat type being restored
Research	# studies used to inform mgmt	Enter the number of studies completed whose findings are used to adapt management/ inform mgmt decisions
Monitoring	# of populations monitored	Enter the # of populations monitored
Monitoring	# sites being monitored	Enter the # sites being monitored

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include: non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations, state or federal government agencies; local governments; municipal governments; Tribal governments and organizations; and educational institutions.
- Ineligible applicants include: Private for-profit firms and 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 AND MATCH

The *ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation* program will award approximately \$1,300,000 in grant awards in 2021. Grant awards will range from \$50,000 to \$250,000. Past grants have typically ranged from \$50,000 to \$150,000. Funded projects should be completed within three years following finalization of a grant agreement.

All grant awards require a minimum 1:1 match of cash or contributed goods and services, of which at least 50% should be from non-Federal sources. The ratio of matching funds offered by the applicant is one criterion considered during the review process. Matching funds 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 recent land acquisition or easement may also qualify as match for a project involving work at the acquired site. In addition, indirect costs that would not be paid with requested grant funding may be applied as match by an applicant with a federally approved indirect rate. More information about using indirect costs as match can be found [here](#).

To be eligible, matching contributions must be:

- raised and dedicated specifically for the project;
- allowable costs based on the program and funding source guidelines;
- applied only to the *ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation* grant and not to any other matching program(s); and
- spent/applied within the period of performance.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with NFWF and funding source policies. Proposals will then be evaluated based on the extent to which they meet the following criteria. A panel of ConocoPhillips, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reviewers will use the criteria as a strong basis for project selections. However, project selections will also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic balance, and balance among project types. In addition, selections may be based on how proposed activities would advance goals of established regional, tribal, state and federal conservation plans, particularly Migratory Bird Joint Venture Implementation Plans. The priorities and goals of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Northern Great Plains Business Plan are also of interest and can be found [here](#).

- **Program Goals and Priorities** – Project contributes to the Program's conservation priorities, 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.
- **Habitat Connectivity or Linkages** - Creates connectivity or linkages between or among migratory (i.e. breeding, stopover, winter) or seasonal movement habitats
- **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 will sustain it after the life of the grant.
- **Scalability/Transferability** – Project has the potential and a plan to scale or transfer lessons learned to other communities or organizations.
- **Communication** – Project includes a detailed plan to communicate information about the project to appropriate audiences.
- **Funding Need** – Project establishes a clear need for the funds being requested and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.
- **Conservation Plan and Context** – The project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy. Migratory Bird Joint Venture Implementation plans, activities, or priorities are of particular interest and can be located here <https://mbjv.org/who-we-are/directory/>. The priorities and goals of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Northern Great Plains Business Plan are also of interest and can be found [here](#).
- **Monitoring** – Project includes a plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise.
- **Long-term Sustainability** – Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. This should include how future funding will be secured to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.
- **Past Success** – Applicant has a proven track record of success in implementing conservation practices with specific and measurable results.

OTHER

- **Budget** – Costs are allowable, reasonable and budgeted in accordance with NFWF’s [Budget Instructions](#) cost categories. Federally-funded projects must be in compliance with [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) as applicable.
- **Matching Contributions** – Matching Contributions consist of cash, contributed goods and services, volunteer hours, and/or property raised and spent for the Project during the Period of Performance. Larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review.

- **Procurement** – If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by NFWF to the applicant does not constitute NFWF’s express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services noncompetitively. When procuring goods and services, NFWF recipients must follow documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable laws and regulations.
- **Publicity and Acknowledgement of Support** – Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF’s financial support for the grant in press releases, publications and other public communications. Recipients 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 Program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information <http://www.nfwf.org/spirit>.

- ✓ Pre-Proposal Due Date May 27, 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time
- ✓ Invitations for Full Proposals Sent Week of June 21, 2021

✓	Full Proposal Due Date	July 19, 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time
✓	Review Period	July 20 – October, 2021
✓	Awards Announced	Mid-November, 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.

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:

Eric Forward
Eric.Forward@nfwf.org
 612-564-7285

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.